LABYRINTH OF LIGHT

A JOURNEY INTO CINEMA

MICHAEL STINSON

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publishing company

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For A

Contents

Acknowledgments *ix*

Preface *xi*

Introduction *xiii*

Cathedrals of Guncotton and Camphor *xiii*

CHAPTER 1 STORY 1

Plato's Allegory · Aristotle's Poetics · Polti's Situations

CHAPTER 2 CONFLICT 13

Conflict · Obstacles · Sex and Violence

CHAPTER 3 JOURNEY 21

Hero · Archetypes · Symbols

CHAPTER 4 LIGHT 29

Camera Obscura · Photography · Cinematography

CHAPTER 5 DARKNESS 41
Shadow ● Hays Code ● Blacklist

CHAPTER 6 SOUND 49
Dialogue ● Music ● Sound Effects

CHAPTER 7 COLOR 57
Painting ● Kodachrome ● Chromatic Language

CHAPTER 8 MOTION 65
Illusion ● Blocking ● Camera

CHAPTER 9 TIME 75
Ellipsis ● Editing ● Chronotope

CHAPTER 10 SPACE 83
Mise-en-Scène ● Frame ● Proxemics

CHAPTER 11 WAVES 93
Truth ● Look ● Dogma

CHAPTER 12 AWAKE 103
Realism ● Neorealism ● New Cinema

CHAPTER 13 DREAM 111
Oneiros ● Formalism ● Antirealism

CHAPTER 14 GENRE 119
Crime ● War ● Horror

CHAPTER 15 AUTHOR 129
Screenwriter ● Director ● Editor

CHAPTER 16 PLAYER 137
Casting ● Character ● Collaboration

CHAPTER 17 LAST LOOKS 145
Lights ● Camera ● Action

Coda 155

Glossary 157

Filmography 169

Selective Bibliography 181

Appendices

Appendix I: Polti's 36 Dramatic Situations 185

Appendix II: The Motion Picture Production Code and MPAA Rating System 187

Appendix III: Dogma 95 Manifesto and Vow of Chastity 191

Appendix IV: Ranking of the Greatest Films of All Time 193

a. According to the American Film Institute (AFI) 193

b. According to TIME Magazine 196

c. According to Internet Movie Database (IMDb) 198
d. According to Variety 201
Appendix V: Viewing Sources 205
Appendix VI: Film Festivals 207
Appendix VII: Writing about Film 209
Index 213
About The Author 227

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PREFACE

During the 1970s, I had the good fortune to be an undergraduate at one of the more progressive campuses in the country: the newly minted University of California, Santa Cruz. The gold-leaf was still shiny on the signage. Classes met under a canopy of towering redwoods. Faculty were chosen for their iconoclastic ideas and experimental pedagogy.

One of my first courses at UCSC was taught by legendary writer, critic, and printer William Everson. He would appear each day for class in a fringed buckskin coat, with silver hair falling to his shoulders, and a long white beard covering his chest.

The course, titled *Birth of a Poet*, consisted of a series of "meditations." Students would sit in a ring on the bare floor. Everson would walk in slow circles around us, weaving a story. Each week was a chapter that contained a loosely linked network of thoughts, observations, reflections, and ideas. Like pieces in an ornate jigsaw puzzle, when taken together these pieces formed a complete whole.

This book is informed by the indelible impression made by those meditations on a young mind. It is structured in much the same way: as a network of thoughts, observations, reflections, and ideas that are designed to form a complete whole. I do not present it as formal scholarship or as a conventional textbook. Instead, its intent is to provide a portal for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of film art.

Over a century ago, the Irish poet William Butler Yeats suggested that "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."

To that end, may this book be a spark.

Introduction

Cathedrals of Guncotton and Camphor

The image on the cover is taken from the vestibule of a church in the French countryside fifty miles southwest of Paris. Immediately upon entering the *Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Chartres*, the visitor's senses are overwhelmed. Sunlight casts brilliant shards of color as it travels through 1000-year-old windows of stained glass. Clouds of pungent incense scent the cool air. Gregorian chants echo through vast, stone vaults overhead. Covering the floor just inside the main entrance, an inlaid medieval labyrinth represents the journey of life with its twists and turns, ups and downs, and the ultimate destination at its center. Pilgrims remove their shoes and slowly navigate the labyrinth before entering sacred space.

In many ways, the movie theater is a secular version of this cathedral, and the motion picture is like a labyrinth of light that takes us on a journey of discovery. Movies provide us with meaning, purpose, community, and even transcendence. They connect with our emotions and psychology at the deepest level, provide an escape from the stress of ordinary life, and transport us to other worlds. Sitting together in the dark, we share a feeling of community and common experience with strangers that reaffirms our humanity. The characters and events on screen give us pause to explore ethical questions and tune the moral compass we use to navigate the complex and shifting norms and values of our world. The cinematic experience can even awaken our spiritual instinct as we sense our connection to something greater than ourselves and are inspired to consider life's big questions.

What have guncotton and camphor to do with all this? In a word: technology. The movies would not exist without it. It wasn't until the invention of a motion picture camera and flexible film stock almost a century and a half ago that filmed entertainment became possible. Highly flammable guncotton was used as a base for cellulose nitrate film. Camphor

was added to reduce the risk of that film bursting into flame as it passed before the projector's carbon-arc lamp. It allowed filmmakers to capture moving images that could be easily transported and projected. This was the first of many technological breakthroughs that have driven the evolution of motion pictures. Primitive photography existed for thousands of years in the form of the *camera obscura* before a device was created that was capable of recording and playing images at sufficient speed to create the illusion of movement. The technology to record synchronized film sound did not arrive until the 1920s. Practical color film stock was not available until the 1950s. Digital filmmaking was not an option until the 1970s. Behind each of these advances was a development in technology that unlocked new realms of creative possibility.

This volume explores cinema from both humanistic and technical perspectives. It examines the many facets that make film unique among the visual arts, from its creative process of storytelling to the art and craft of capturing moving images. It delves into the history of the movies and examines major milestones that have shaped the industry. It touches on the role of film in society, its impact on culture, and how it reflects and shapes our understanding of the world around us. Finally, it looks at ways in which filmmakers use cinema's formal elements to convey underlying themes in an immersive and engaging way.

You possess the ticket for a journey into a labyrinth of light: the world of cinema.

1 | Story

Plato's Allegory • Aristotle's Poetics • Polti's Situations

"Those who tell the stories rule the world."

—Hopi proverb

Imagine a time long ago . . . the world is cold and dark . . . you have taken shelter in a shallow cave. A fire burns at the entrance to discourage the hungry creatures that roam the darkness. The air here is thick with wood smoke and the odor of close-packed bodies. You feel the cool earth beneath the soles of your bare feet and the prickling hairs of a rough hide on your shoulders. Through the flames, you make out the mud-smudged faces of bearded men, sun-bronzed women, and wide-eyed children: your tribe. You can hear the snarl and howl of nocturnal predators outside. Your kinsmen huddle closer to the fire. All except one: an elder with a full beard and long silver hair braided with the teeth of wolves, his chest and shoulders tattooed with thick scars. He remains at the edge of the light, scratching images of men and animals on the wall above: crude renderings of the hunt and battles with hostile tribes. You watch and wait . . . patiently anticipating what you know will come: the entertainment that will help pass the long and fearful night.

Finally, he lays down the charred stick, brushes unwanted flecks of charcoal from his rendering, and turns to face the fire. One eye is clouded from an ancient injury, but his voice is strong and sonorous. At his first utterance, everyone falls silent . . . taking in every word . . . each person mirroring the events he describes in their imagination.

"We crept closer to the great beast . . ." the Shaman begins, pointing to his crude drawing on the cave wall. You can see the creature in your mind: the yellow eyes and blood-crusted fangs. "Spears raised, we leapt forth, thrusting our blades deep in his neck. Blood rained upon us!" he shouts with wide eyes and splayed hands. The children cringe and retreat to the comfort of their parents' arms. Not you. You are ready for this and want more . . . want to be on that hunt . . . to smell the blood for yourself.

That is the power of the story. From 17,000-year-old cave drawings in the Vézère Valley of France to Egyptian Bronze Age hieroglyphs to Greek dramas and Elizabethan stage plays, story narrates and gives meaning to our experience at every station on the line of human civilization.

It is no wonder, then, that movies have become a global medium that transcends our national borders and unites us in shared experience. Film has become the primal fire we gather around, and the filmmaker, our version of the ancient shaman, distracts us from our existential fears and helps give meaning to the chaos of modern life.

Himalayan Thriller

In the early 1980s, a young American backpacker braved the monsoon rains to trek out of Pokhara, Nepal, into the remote villages that line the trail to the fabled Annapurna. After two days and a night slogging through mud on a high-altitude track, he took shelter in a primitive tea house carved out of the south-facing slope. There was no electricity and no running water. A battered teapot hung over a fire that filled the room with the pungent odor of burning coal. The walls were decorated with yellowed pages from an airline magazine advertising Swiss watches that cost more than the entire village earned in a lifetime of rice harvests.

Into this sodden refuge, a Nepali boy of eight or nine appeared and inquired in British-accented English: "Do you wish to watch a movie?" He explained that a UN development agency had air-lifted a diesel generator into his village and a local porter carried a salvaged VHS-TV on his back from the valley below. A late-season trekker had left a VHS video tape in the village: the music video *Thriller* (1983) featuring Michael Jackson, the most popular entertainer in the world at that time. So, there they were, in a stone hut clinging to the flank of Machapuchari, with no electric lines or running water, using a diesel generator and an ancient TV to watch Michael Jackson moonwalk his way through an early music video.

There is nowhere on the face of the earth—from the heights of the Himalayas to the depths of the Amazon—that cinema in some form has not touched and transformed. In one of the ironies of the last century, America has repeatedly tried and failed to export its values and influence abroad using military and economic might, while Hollywood motion pictures have succeeded in achieving that very goal by providing a product that global audiences desire.

The result is an unprecedented cross-pollination of cultures. Audiences in Siberia and Patagonia watch American movies, while in Hollywood, the South Korean thriller *Parasite* (2019) sweeps the Oscars, and the official AAMPAS museum dedicates exhibitions to international filmmakers Guillermo del Toro, Hayao Miyazaki, Agnès Varda, and Pedro Almodóvar.

Plato's Cave

Twenty-four centuries ago, the Greek philosopher Plato introduced the "allegory of the cave" into his discourse. He asks us to imagine a group of prisoners watching shadows cast by firelight on the wall of a cave. They are tightly chained and cannot turn to see the objects casting those shadows. For them, the shadows are their reality. This conceit has given birth to numerous film plots such as *The Truman Show* (1998) and *The Matrix* (1999), and it neatly illustrates what happens when we sit in a darkened movie theater and enter the events on screen.

Just as Plato's tethered prisoners mistake the passing shadows of men and beasts for reality, we allow ourselves to let go of the awareness of a movie's unreality to live the events on screen as if they are taking place around us. This willing suspension of disbelief affords us the opportunity to experience virtual jeopardy without putting ourselves in real danger. The result is a catharsis akin to what happens on a rollercoaster ride: we experience true feelings of fear followed by the pleasurable release and exhilaration of survival.

This is what Plato's student Aristotle talks about in his *Poetics*. Theatrical productions were already commonplace in Greece in the third century BCE, and Aristotle's exploration of story is filled with illustrative examples taken from the plays of his day. He describes how tragedy allows the audience to purge negative emotions like pity, horror, and fear by drawing those emotions out using fictional events depicted on stage. Anyone who has watched *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) or *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) has experienced the same phenomenon.

Story Structure

To achieve the illusion of reality that allows us to suspend our disbelief and experience the events as a virtual participant, a story must follow certain conventions. There must be something or someone in the story that captures our sympathy. This character is sometimes called the protagonist or hero. It doesn't need to be a person; it was an anthropomorphic car in *The Love Bug* (1968), an ogre in *Shrek* (2001), and a robot in *WALL-E* (2008). The important thing is that we care about what happens to this fictional character. This is achieved by creating a bond between the audience and the character. The greater our sympathy for this person or thing, the more invested we will be in their fate. In most stories, this is accomplished through what might be called a "pat the dog" moment soon after we meet the character. It's often something simple: opening the door for an elder, helping a child retrieve a ball, or dropping a coin into a panhandler's cup. Whatever small act of kindness is portrayed; the goal is the same: to connect us with the character as they move forward on their fictional journey.

In *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, Lajos Egri codifies many of the conventions of dramatic storytelling. Like Aristotle before him, he begins by stressing the importance of structure. A story must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning (act one), the middle (act two), and the end (act three) unfold in a logical cause-and-effect sequence. Unlike real life where things often happen randomly and without purpose, drama demands action that is directed toward a destination. This destination is the main character's desired goal, and it is the driving force behind the story's dramatic action.

In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet,* it is the lovers' goal of being united that drives the story. The obstacles that block the characters' progress toward this goal create the conflict on which the drama depends. UCLA screenwriting guru Richard Walter would frequently admonish his graduate students to remember that "nobody goes to the movies to watch the village of the happy, nice people." Effective drama requires conflict that is intrinsically violent. The violence can be physical, emotional, psychological, or spiritual, but it is essential to dramatic art. Conflict results whenever our hero hits a roadblock as they journey toward their goal. Sparks fly. Blood is spilled.

Secret Formula

There are many pundits who claim to have decoded the secret formula for successful motion picture storytelling. Robert McKee presents seminars around the world that distill the essence of the story into choices human beings make under pressure. Syd Field's book

Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting emphasizes the protagonist overcoming obstacles in pursuit of a goal. Christopher Vogler uses the archetypal journey of the hero from Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* to codify the mythic structures embedded in motion picture storytelling.

Although all these approaches have merit, none of them is an exclusive on-ramp to success as a filmmaker. The reality is that there are many roads (trails, footpaths, and open ground) that lead to this destination. Consider some of the breakout films during the year 2021: *Dune* (2021), an epic melodrama based on a science fiction novel; *Licorice Pizza* (2021), a sweetly nostalgic coming-of-age story; and *Raw* (2021), an intimate study of family dysfunction and cannibalism. None of these follows a prescribed recipe and each has an idiosyncratic quality that resonated with audiences and led to critical acclaim.

Essential Ingredients

Although a motion picture may follow one of many roads, there are certain conventions of storytelling that must be addressed. A table is a table because it possesses a flat, horizontal surface. A chair is a chair because it has somewhere to plant your backside. What sets a story apart from a table or chair (or cantaloupe or a bicycle) is this: it has a hero. The hero has a goal. Obstacles must be overcome to reach that goal. It doesn't matter if the story is *War and Peace* or *Parasite* (2019), the same conventions apply: hero, goal, and obstacles.

In the beginning (act one), the audience is introduced to the world of the story and the main characters. The goal of the hero (protagonist) is revealed in what is sometimes called the first plot point or inciting incident. The protagonist rarely embraces this challenge. It is too difficult or painful or unlikely to be successful. Then something happens to give them a kick in the pants. In the case of *Star Wars* (1977), Storm Troopers kill Luke Skywalker's family and burn down his house. In *Blade Runner* (1982), the titular character is called back into service by his former boss with an offer he can't refuse. In *The Matrix* (1999), Neo initially resists Morpheus and Trinity but gives in after being terrorized by a team of Agents.

The second act of any story consists of the hero overcoming obstacles as they pursue their goal. It doesn't matter if the goal is killing a crew of rogue replicants, robbing a casino, or getting a date to the prom; obstacles must be overcome to reach that goal. Each obstacle in the second act is more difficult than the last. Imagine a track-and-field athlete running the hurdles where each hurdle is six inches higher than the last.

At the precise midpoint of the story, a peculiar thing happens. Check your watch as the first shot of a movie appears on screen and check it again exactly sixty minutes into the plot. You will notice a shift. Instead of simply running away or blindly moving toward their goal, the hero stops and plans. They go from reacting to external events to being proactive and strategic.

By the end of the second act, a final hurdle appears that seems impossible for the hero to surmount. They have been chased to the edge of the cliff. They are out of ammo. The villain/monster/ghost is closing in for the kill. In story structure, this is called the second plot point, crisis, or "darkest hour." The hero is as far from their goal as possible. Failure seems inevitable. This marks the end of act two.

Deus ex Machina

The ancient Greek dramatists often employed a device called *deus ex machina* or "god out of the machine" to bring their plays to a satisfactory conclusion. This device consisted of an actor dressed as one of the Greek gods lowered by a crane or lifted by a riser onto the stage to resolve the central conflict and conclude the story. This device (or something like it) is often employed early in the third act of a movie to bring the story to a satisfactory conclusion. The *deus ex machina* device might be a forgotten lottery ticket, or a hidden superpower, or a shocking sacrifice. In any case, the hero reaches their goal . . . but in a surprising or unexpected way.

Most films are two hours long (about 120 minutes). Most screenplays are 120 pages or one page for each minute of screen time. Act one occupies the first quarter (or 30 minutes) of the movie. Thus, the inciting incident or first plot point generally occurs about 28 minutes into the film. In most movies, the second act is the bulk of the story and takes up about an hour of screen time. The midpoint is dead center, one hour into a two-hour film. You can set your watch by what happens at this 60-minute mark. The second plot point or "darkest hour" occurs just before the end of act two, about 88 minutes into the film. Finally, the climax that resolves the story (with or without a *deus ex machina* device) usually happens early in the third act (somewhere between the 90- and 100-minute mark).

Not all movies are two hours long, and not all stories follow this pattern with precision. At the 1966 Cannes film festival, the iconic French director Jean-Luc Godard was asked if he thought movies needed a beginning, middle, and end. "Yes," he famously replied, "but not necessarily in that order." There are ample examples of successful films that bend or

break the conventions of motion picture storytelling, from *Pulp Fiction* (1994) to *Dunkirk* (2017) and *Memento* (2000). However, it is safe to say that these exceptions serve to prove the rule.

Pursuit, Disaster, and Revolt

The nineteenth-century French writer Georges Polti published a book suggesting that all stories can be categorized into one of thirty-six dramatic situations. He cast his net wide enough to encompass almost any story. According to Polti, all stories are based on one or more of the following situations: supplication, deliverance, vengeance, pursuit, disaster, misfortune, revolt, enterprise, abduction, enigma, obtaining, enmity, rivalry, adultery, madness, imprudence, love crimes, slaying of kin, self-sacrifice, sacrificing a loved one, rivalry, adultery, love crimes, discovery, obstacles to love, an enemy loved, ambition, conflict with God, mistaken jealousy, bad judgment, remorse, recovery of a lost one, or loss of loved ones. After watching a film, it is worth considering which (if any) of these dramatic situations may apply to the story.

Ellipsis

In addition to the broad strokes of three-act and hero–goal–obstacle structures, the plot of a film has its own structure based on the order in which events are presented on screen. Virtually all motion pictures depend on ellipsis, or what is left out. There are notable exceptions to this principle such as *Rope* (1948), *Snake Eyes* (1998), and *Timecode* (2000), which take place in real time without visible cuts. However, screen time (the playing time of the movie) is generally much shorter than plot time (the explicitly presented events on screen) which in turn is generally shorter than story time (the sum of all explicit and implicit information transmitted to the audience during the film). The standard two-hour screen time is driven by the reality that most audiences can only sit still and pay attention for that amount of time. Hitchcock was known to attend preview screenings of his films to listen for the sound of squeaking seats that signaled that the audience was getting restless. He would then make the necessary cuts to bring the film down to a "squeak-less" length.

As the novelist E.M. Forster observed, "The king died and then the queen died is a story. The king died and then the queen died of grief is a plot." A good plot has rules of its

own. Get in at the last possible moment and get out at the first possible moment. Withhold and reveal information in a way that most effectively engages the curiosity of the audience. Utilize surprise and suspense. In F. Scott Fitzgerald's unfinished novel, *The Last Tycoon*, there is a wonderful scene where Hollywood producer Monroe Stahr explains the magic of visual storytelling to a jaded screenwriter:

> A pretty stenographer that you've seen before comes into the room and you watch her—idly. She doesn't see you, though you're very close to her. She takes off her gloves, opens her purse and dumps it out on a table . . . She has two dimes and a nickel—and a cardboard match box. She leaves the nickel on the desk, puts the two dimes back into her purse and takes her black gloves to the stove, opens it and puts them inside. There is one match in the matchbox and she starts to light it kneeling by the stove. You notice that there's a stiff wind blowing in the window—but just then your telephone rings. The girl picks it up, says hello—listens—and says deliberately into the phone, 'I've never owned a pair of black gloves in my life.' She hangs up, kneels by the stove again and, just as she lights the match, you glance around very suddenly and see that there's another man in the office, watching every move the girl makes . . . .

The screenwriter is so entranced by the story that he can't help but ask what happens next. Stahr replies that he doesn't know. "I was just making pictures," he explains. He employs what Hitchcock called a "MacGuffin"—an event or object that is key to launching the story but later proves to be insignificant or irrelevant. The stolen money in *Psycho* (1960) is a notable example. It serves to set the story in motion but soon disappears into the tar pit along with the mutilated body of Marion Crane.

Dubbed the "master of suspense" by film critics, Hitchcock explained his signature technique in an extended interview with French New Wave director François Truffaut:

> We are now having a very innocent little chat. Let us suppose that there is a bomb underneath this table between us. Nothing happens, and then all of a sudden, "Boom!" There is an explosion. The public is *surprised* but prior to the surprise it has seen an absolutely ordinary scene of no special consequence. Now let us take a *suspense* situation. The bomb is underneath the table and the public *knows* it, probably because they've seen the anarchist place it there. The public is *aware* that the bomb is going to explode at one o'clock and there is a clock in the décor. The public can see that it is a quarter to one. In these conditions the same innocuous conversation becomes fascinating because the public is participating in the scene. The audience is longing to warn the characters on the screen.

Not all stories are created equal. Some are best suited to a book or magazine, others to a podcast or stand-up comedy routine, and still others to an art installation or episodic television show. Hollywood production companies are constantly on the lookout for material but seldom have a clear idea of exactly what they are seeking. If pressed, most studio executives will invoke Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's 1964 definition of obscenity: "I know it when I see it."

The stories that are most likely to make it through the studio development machine are those classified as "high concept." Simply put, a high-concept story is one with a clear and obvious hook that can be easily transmitted from one person to the next. In the typical story development process, the writer pitches a junior executive who pitches a senior executive who pitches a vice president who pitches the president of production. The central concept of the pitch must be streamlined enough to survive intact through all these layers of studio bureaucracy.

The kiss of death is for an executive to label a project as "character driven" or "execution dependent" which is often another way of saying the story lacks independent merit and would require great acting or great directing to bring it to life. In contrast, a "high-concept" idea is considered bomb-proof because the idea itself is the selling point. *Big* (1988) and *Freaky Friday* (2003) are examples of successful high-concept films. This is not to say that character-driven or execution-dependent projects never get made. Well-known actors and established directors will often take on passion projects that would never survive without a powerful advocate.

Welcome to Hollywood

Imagine for a moment that you are a screenwriter with a script you have written on your own time and your own dime. It is an inspired, original idea filled with passion and energy. The world of the story is richly evoked, and the characters are vivid and believable. The dialogue crackles with authentic and memorable speech. The drama is powerful and moving. What now? How do you get your work one step closer to the big screen?

The studios for the most part will not even consider direct submissions. Everything must come through an attorney or talent agent. This protects them from legal liability and helps finance an extended feeder network for new content. Attorneys typically receive 5 percent of the gross on each contract they negotiate. Talent agents earn 10 percent. A manager (someone who handles day-to-day communication on behalf of the writer with studio/producer/agent/attorney) may also receive 10 percent of gross payments. That's a quarter off the top that the writer will never see.

Let's say you meet a friend of a friend who is starting as a manager. He suggests that you send your screenplay with a polite and humorous cover letter to several talent agencies. He doesn't ask for anything in return except a commission if he helps sell your script. Along the way he introduces you to a junior agent at one of the big firms (CAA, WME, UTA, ICM, etc.) who agrees to represent you as a "hip pocket" (unofficial) client and agrees to show your script around town. A few days later, your agent sets up a meeting with a junior executive at a production company with offices on the Warner Brothers lot.

You arrive on the lot and the guard at the gate checks your name off on a clipboard and directs you to a cluster of bungalows next to one of the sound stages. Inside, an impeccably groomed receptionist asks if you would like a bottle of Evian water as she leads you back to a corner office. Behind a heavy wooden desk, a better-dressed version of your college roommate waves you in and points to a black leather couch against the wall. He's talking on his iPhone while scrolling through texts on a laptop. As you struggle to avoid sinking into the down-filled expanse of the couch, he terminates his call with a curt "I've got a meeting" and directs his attention toward you. "I haven't read your script but it got good coverage," he says. "Why don't you start by telling me what it's about."

Resist Temptation

The temptation at this juncture is to launch into a scene-by-scene account of the plot of your movie. That is a mistake. What the executive wants is something more fundamental: the theme—the underlying, core emotional meaning of your story. It may be hope, or perseverance, or betrayal, or duality. Whatever the theme, it should be expressible in a single word. Rather than a long-winded account of the plot mechanics, you simply reply that your movie is about redemption (or courage, or loyalty, or loss).

The rest of your pitch bounces back and forth from this theme to the ways it plays out in your story. If you are successful, the executive will pass your screenplay onto a senior executive along with "coverage" (likely written by the impeccably groomed receptionist) that sums up the story in a "log line," provides a one-page outline of the characters and plot, and checks one of three boxes: Reject, Consider, or Recommend.

Lucky you: the reader checked the "Recommend" box. The senior executive calls your agent and makes a preemptive offer to buy the script for development. The offer is $100,000 which your agent advises is a good starting quote for a first-time writer. He introduces you to an attorney to go over the legal paperwork from the studio.

You sign the contract, and you are on your way. But . . . wait a minute . . . the contract is broken down into three steps: a draft, a set of revisions, and a polish. The agent explains

that even though you have already written the screenplay, the studio wants you to produce another draft of it based on their comments and critique. You will receive a check for one-sixth of your payment when you start work on that draft (commencement payment) and another one-sixth when you turn it in (completion payment). The "set" and the "polish" are also likely to be page-one rewrites based on studio notes, each paid on commencement and completion.

When the first check arrives, you are surprised at the dollar amount. Your agent explains the amount of the contract puts you in the highest category for Federal and State taxes—close to 50 percent. Oh, and by the way, the agent, manager, and attorney commissions are taken out of the pretax amount. That means that you are under contract to write for the studio for a year or more for a net sum on par with the W-2 of a barista at Starbucks.

Never mind . . . you have broken into the movie business!

2 | Conflict

Conflict ◆ Obstacles ◆ Sex and Violence

"Drama is life with the dull bits cut out."

—Alfred Hitchcock

Drama has been a popular art form for thousands of years, serving as a means of communication and entertainment for audiences across time and geography. The nature of drama is complex. It incorporates characters, plot, settings, themes, and language to generate an experience that connects with an audience. Through drama, we can be transported to different worlds and centuries, gain insight into the lives of others, and achieve a greater understanding of ourselves. Dramatic art takes many forms, including theater, opera, and ballet. However, most of us experience it through filmed entertainment delivered on the screen of a television, computer, tablet, phone, or local movie theater.

At its core, all drama is about conflict. It tells the story of characters who are faced with obstacles and challenges, and how they respond to them. These conflicts can be internal or external, and they drive the plot forward, creating tension and suspense. Through the plot, characters are tested, their strengths and weaknesses revealed, and ultimately, they are changed in some fundamental way. Characters can be fictional or based on real people, but they must be believable and well-developed if the drama is to succeed. Lacking those qualities, a character is considered "flat" or one-dimensional. Successful "round" characters have distinct personalities, motivations, and flaws that are uncovered through their

actions and dialogue. Such characters allow the audience to empathize, identify with their struggles, and feel their emotions. In this way, drama becomes a powerful tool for exploring human nature and the human condition.

Theme

Dramatic storytelling begins with a theme. It can be universal, such as betrayal, hope, or redemption, or it can be specific to a particular situation. The theme of a drama often relates to the conflict that a character faces, and it can be used to explore deeper issues and ideas. For example, a drama about a family struggling to survive after a natural disaster might also explore themes of loyalty, hope, or perseverance.

The setting plays an important role in any dramatic situation. It can be a specific location, such as a country or city, or it can be more abstract, such as a social environment or historical time period. The setting provides a context for the action and helps create atmosphere and mood. It can also be used to reinforce the themes of the drama, such as the contrast between urban and rural life, or the effects of war on society.

Language is essential to drama. That language can be spoken or visual. Characters express their thoughts and feelings through dialogue, and it is partly through spoken language that the themes and messages of the drama are conveyed. The language of a drama can be poetic, realistic, or stylized, depending on the genre and the intended effect. Rhythms and patterns of speech can create tension or reveal emotion.

However, it is important to remember that the primary language of cinema is visual. A film that is primarily "pictures of people talking" (Hitchcock) fails to exploit cinema's potential as a universal language and is unlikely to appeal to a global audience. *The Artist* (2011) won five Academy Awards and universal acclaim for its masterful rendering of a dramatic story in visual images, with only two words of spoken dialogue in the entire film.

Greece, Rome, and Egypt

The earliest records of drama can be traced back to the ancient civilizations of Greece, Rome, and Egypt. In ancient Greece, drama emerged as a form of public entertainment in the fifth century BCE. The playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides wrote some of the most famous Greek tragedies, which were performed at religious festivals such as the

Dionysia. These plays explored themes of fate, honor, and the relationship between humans and the gods and were performed by a chorus and actors in elaborate costumes and masks. The *deus ex machina* plot device dates to these plays.

In ancient Rome, drama developed as a means of political propaganda and entertainment. The playwrights Plautus and Terence wrote popular comedies that dealt with everyday life and human foibles, while the tragedian Seneca explored themes of power and morality. The Roman theater was more lavish and spectacular than the Greek, with complex sets and special effects.

In ancient Egypt, drama was closely linked to religion and performed during religious festivals and rituals. These performances included the passion play of Osiris, which dramatized the story of the god's death and resurrection, and the feast of *Opet* which celebrated the Pharaoh's power and fertility. These performances also included elaborate costumes, music, and dance and were designed to appeal to the gods and gain their favor.

Drama developed in other parts of the ancient world as well, including India and China. The Sanskrit play *The Little Clay Cart*, written around the third century BCE, is one of the oldest surviving plays from India, while the Chinese play *The Peony Pavilion*, written in the sixteenth century, is a famous example of Chinese *Kunqu* opera. The earliest records of drama demonstrate its enduring power as a means of entertainment, education, and cultural expression.

Types of Conflict

In all drama, conflict is an essential element, serving as the driving force behind the plot, character development, and themes. It can take many forms, such as external conflicts between characters, internal conflicts within characters, and conflicts between characters and their environment. These conflicts provide tension and suspense and help to engage the audience and keep them invested in the story.

Self versus Other

External conflicts between characters are perhaps the most common form of dramatic conflict. These conflicts arise when two or more characters have opposing goals, beliefs, or values and must struggle to gain their objective. The conflict can be physical, such as a

battle or a fight, or it can be psychological, such as a battle of wits or a clash of personalities. This "self versus other" conflict involves two or more characters pitted against each other in some way.

In literature, the "self versus other" conflict can be found in many classic works, such as William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which centers on the conflict between the Montagues and the Capulets, two rival families in Verona who are locked in a bitter feud. The conflict escalates when Romeo, a Montague, falls in love with Juliet, a Capulet, and they must navigate their families' hatred and opposition to their relationship. This conflict ultimately leads to tragic consequences, but it also serves to explore themes such as loyalty, desire, and the destructive power of hate.

In film, the "self versus other" conflict can be found in many different genres, including war movies, Westerns, science fiction films, and crime dramas. A prime example is the film *Heat* (1995), which centers on the conflict between two men, a master criminal named Neil and a detective named Vincent, who are on opposite sides of the law. Throughout the film, the two men engage in a psychological battle, each trying to outsmart and outmaneuver the other. This conflict ultimately leads to a climactic showdown, but it also serves to explore themes such as morality, justice, and the line between good and evil.

In these examples, the "self versus other" conflict is a means of creating tension and drama, as the characters engage in a struggle that appears impossible to resolve. It also explores important themes and ideas, such as the power of love and hate, the nature of justice, and the complexity of human relationships. "Self versus other" conflict is a useful and familiar device because it provides a means of exploring a wide range of themes and ideas through the struggles of individual characters. These reflect a universal struggle that all humans can relate to, as we have all experienced conflict with others at some point in our lives. Through this form of conflict, drama reveals the depth and complexity of human relationships and emotions.

Self versus Self

Drama can also be generated by internal conflict within a character. These conflicts arise when a character is torn between two opposing desires, such as love and duty, or when a character must confront their own fears or flaws. Internal conflicts can be just as intense as external conflicts and can lead to important moments of character development and revelation. They can also help to reinforce the themes of a drama and provide insight into the human condition. Known as "self versus self," this form of conflict occurs when a character is struggling with internal dilemmas, such as moral or ethical decisions, emotional turmoil,

or inner demons. This kind of conflict often results in profound personal growth and character development, making it a powerful tool for storytelling.

The "self versus self" conflict is a common theme in drama and it also reflects a universal struggle as it speaks to the innermost fears and doubts that we all harbor. This conflict can be explored in a variety of ways, including the use of monologues, inner dialogue, and visual imagery. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, for example, the titular character struggles with the decision of whether to avenge his father's murder. Throughout the play, Hamlet's inner turmoil is evident in his soliloquies, where he wrestles with the morality of taking revenge and the consequences that would result from it. This conflict ultimately leads to Hamlet's tragic end, but it also serves to reveal his true character and the depth of his emotions.

Another example of the "self versus self" conflict can be found in the film *Black Swan* (2010), which follows the story of a ballerina named Nina as she strives for perfection in her performance of the ballet *Swan Lake*. Nina's internal struggles are the primary focus of the film, as she deals with her own fears, insecurities, and self-doubt. Throughout the film, the viewer sees the impact of Nina's inner demons on her relationships, her health, and her performance. This conflict ultimately leads to a tragic ending, but it also serves to reveal the complexity of Nina's character and the challenges faced by all performers in the arts.

The "self versus self" conflict provides a means of exploring the human condition in a deeply personal and relatable way. Through this form of conflict, characters can face their own inner demons and emerge changed and transformed. It can also provide insight into important themes and issues, such as mental health, personal growth, and the nature of human relationships. The "self versus self" conflict is a frequent and important element in drama because it has the power to reveal the depths of the human psyche.

Self versus World

The conflict between characters and the world of their environment is yet another species of drama. These conflicts arise when characters are faced with a hostile or challenging world, such as a harsh wilderness or a corrupt society. This type of conflict explores important themes, such as the struggle for survival, the corruption of power, and the relationship between humans and nature. A classic example can be found in Jack London's novel, *The Call of the Wild*. The story follows the adventures of a domesticated dog named Buck, who is stolen and sold into the brutal world of the Alaskan wilderness. In this harsh environment, Buck must learn to adapt and survive, facing challenges such as starvation, cruelty, and the primal instincts of the other dogs. Through this conflict, Buck is transformed

from a domesticated pet into a fierce and independent wild animal, and the reader is given insight into the power and cruelty of nature.

A similar story unfolds in the film *The Revenant* (2015). Based on a true story, the film follows the character of Hugh Glass as he struggles to survive in the brutal wilderness of the American West in the 1820s. After being mauled by a bear and left for dead by his companions, Glass must battle freezing temperatures, hunger, and hostile Native American tribes as he attempts to make his way back to civilization. Through this conflict, the film explores themes of survival, revenge, and the impact of nature on human beings.

In both examples, the "self versus world" conflict creates tension and suspense, establishes setting and mood, and immerses the audience in a harsh and unforgiving environment. Characters face the challenges of nature and emerge transformed, gaining insight into their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as the power and cruelty of the environment around them.

Obstacles

Obstacles are an essential component of classical storytelling because they generate the conflict that is essential to drama. Obstacles are challenges that the protagonist must overcome in order to achieve their goals or desires. These obstacles take many forms, from physical challenges to emotional and psychological barriers. They are used to drive the plot forward and create a sense of urgency and suspense.

By presenting the protagonist with challenges that seem insurmountable, the story is rendered engaging and exciting. The audience becomes invested in the outcome, hoping that the protagonist will overcome the obstacles and achieve their goals. This creates anticipation that keeps the audience interested. As the protagonist struggles to overcome obstacles in their path, they come into conflict with other characters or forces in the story.

Obstacles also serve to reveal the character of the protagonist. By presenting the character with challenges, we are given insight into their strengths and weaknesses, and how they respond to adversity. This can be used to create more complex and nuanced characters, making them relatable to the audience.

Finally, obstacles drive the plot forward. As the protagonist works to overcome obstacles in their path, the story progresses, and we are taken on a journey. The final and most daunting obstacle a hero must overcome is the crisis of the story. By surmounting this final obstacle and reaching their goal, they provide us with a satisfying conclusion.

Violence

When voices are raised protesting "violence in the movies," they are shouting into the wind. Our collective storehouse of stories from Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* (where the hero kills his father, has sex with his mom, then pokes out his own eyes) to the original *Grimm's Fairy Tales* (where Hansel and Gretel's parents abandon them in the forest to save money on groceries) and urban legends like *The Candyman* (1992)—all are filled with violent conflict. This is what gives us the pleasure of catharsis. After all, it is not our fate (hopefully) to be abandoned on a witch's doorstep or pursued by ghosts. Stories enable us to have the experience without paying the price.

Sex and violence have played a significant role in classical narratives throughout history. These themes are found in literature, film, theater, and all other forms of storytelling and are used to create tension, drama, and emotional impact in the narrative. Although some argue that these elements are exploitative or harmful because they desensitize audiences to real-world violence or stoke licentious behavior, they have been woven into the fabric of classical narrative from ancient times.

In cinema, sex and violence are often used to create conflict or tension. French *auteur* director Jean-Luc Goddard once famously proclaimed "All you need to make a movie is a girl and a gun." These elements can be used to explore complex emotional and psychological issues, such as power, desire, and morality. In many cases, the depiction of sex and violence is used to shock the audience and create a visceral emotional response, such as fear, desire, or disgust. This can be a powerful lever in storytelling to create an emotional bond between the audience and the characters.

Sex

Sexual content has played a part in motion pictures from the very beginning. One of the first films, William Heise's *The Kiss* (1896), portrays a couple embracing and passionately kissing on screen. Louise Brooks plays a seductive and sexually liberated woman in *Pandora's Box* (1929) and Hedy Lamarr skinny dips in *Ecstasy* (1933), which features full frontal nudity and simulated sex. In Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), a demented scientist creates a robotic duplicate of the film's most virtuous character, and this doppelganger performs an erotic nude dance that whips a ballroom full of tuxedo-clad aristocrats into a sexual frenzy. Hardcore pornography made its cinematic debut over a century ago with *A Free Ride* (1915), which portrays two female hitchhikers picked up by a mustachioed man in a Model-T Ford. The film *Frankenstein* (1931) included suggestions of sexual desire

between the monster and a female character. Similarly, the original *King Kong* (1933) featured a sexualized relationship between the title character and the female lead.

When the Production Code began to break down in the 1960s, filmmakers were once again free to include more explicit depictions of sex and violence in their films. Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) famously included a shower scene that depicted graphic violence and nudity. The film was considered shocking at the time of its release but is now a classic of the horror genre. Penn's transgressive *Bonnie and Clyde* (1965) casts Bonnie as a nymphomaniac and Clyde as an impotent bank robber who channels his sexual frustration into acts of violence. The film sparked a revolution in screen violence that paved the way for "Bloody Sam" Peckinpah's brutal Western *The Wild Bunch* (1969) and the ultraviolent films of Quentin Tarantino.

In the 1970s, the genre of exploitation films emerged, which often included extreme depictions of violence and sexual content. In the 1980s and 1990s, the horror genre became increasingly popular, and many films included graphic violence and sexuality. *Friday the 13th* (1980) is a classic example, featuring both violence and sexualized nudity. Similarly, the original *Scream* (1996) contains violence and sexual themes. By the 2000s and 2010s, screen violence had become so pervasive and extreme that it bordered on self-parody. For example, *American Psycho* (2000) portrays a wealthy New York investment banker who acts out his homicidal fantasies on friends and coworkers with impunity and *Inglorious Bastards* (2009) shows a squad of US soldiers who take scalps as they exact bloody revenge on the Nazis.

Sexually explicit films also entered the mainstream during this period. *Blue is the Warmest Color* (2013) included extended and graphic scenes of lesbian sexuality, Lars von Trier's *Nymphomaniac* (2013) courted controversy with its treatment of sexual pathology, and *Love* (2015) directed by Gaspar Noé featured prolonged nonsimulated sex presented in 3D.

From the early days of film to the present, sex and violence have played a role in shaping the medium and the way audiences perceive it. While some films have been criticized for their exploitation of these themes, others have been praised for their sensitivity and artistry. Ultimately, cinema is an exploration of the human experience. Sex and violence are intrinsic to life and therefore to cinema. We long for peace and harmony in our personal lives but seek conflict and drama in our entertainment. After all, no one goes to the movies (or reads a novel or attends a play) to watch "the village of the happy, nice people."

3 | JOURNEY

Hero • Archetypes • Symbols

"Myths are public dreams, dreams are private myths."

—Joseph Campbell

As Aristotle observed in his *Poetics*, all stories share common characteristics such as three-act structure and a hero in pursuit of a goal. However, two millennia worth of stories, plays, novels, operas, and films produced since Aristotle's time also reflect underlying themes, structures, and archetypes that American mythologist Joseph Campbell refers to in his seminal book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* as "The Hero's Journey."

The journey of the hero is a narrative framework that describes the classic story structure of myths and legends from around the world. According to Campbell, this journey follows a specific pattern, where the protagonist undergoes a series of trials and challenges to achieve a greater goal, such as self-discovery, enlightenment, or the defeat of an evil force.

This journey can be divided into three major sections: departure, initiation, and return. The departure stage includes a call to adventure, the hero's refusal of the call, and their crossing of a threshold. The call to adventure is the moment when the protagonist is presented with a challenge or opportunity that sets them on their journey. This could be a message from a supernatural being, a sudden change in circumstances, or a personal revelation. The refusal is when the hero hesitates to take on the challenge, often due to fear or uncertainty. However, they eventually cross the threshold and leave their ordinary world behind, venturing into the unknown.

Departure

Examples of this narrative structure are everywhere in cinema. In *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), Dorothy's ordinary world is destroyed by a tornado, and she must face a series of trials and obstacles to reach the Emerald City and make her way back with the knowledge that "there's no place like home." In *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977), Luke Skywalker's home is destroyed, which sends him on a quest to save Princess Leia and use the force to confront Darth Vader and eliminate the Death Star. In *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), Frodo Baggins reluctantly sets off on a quest that includes many dangers and obstacles to destroy the One Ring and vanquish the Dark Lord Sauron.

Initiation

The initiation stage includes a series of trials and challenges that the hero must overcome. These include tests, enemies, an ordeal, and an ultimate reward. The tests represent challenges that the hero must overcome to gain the knowledge, skills, or experience necessary to achieve their goal. Enemies are obstacles that the hero must defeat. The ordeal is a moment of great danger or suffering. The reward is the achievement of the hero's goal or the gaining of a greater understanding of themselves or the world around them.

In Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (2001), Harry sets out on a journey to stop Voldemort from obtaining the Philosopher's Stone. Along the way, he is tested by a series of challenges before ultimately defeating Voldemort. In *The Matrix* (1999), Neo must overcome dangers and roadblocks on his quest to overthrow the Matrix and free humanity from the machines.

Return

The final stage of the hero's journey is "the return" which includes the road back, resurrection (the hero's ultimate triumph and transformation), and "return with the elixir" which is a homecoming elevated by newfound wisdom. In *The Hunger Games* (2012), this takes the form of Katniss defying the leadership, refusing to kill Peeta, and returning to the Capital as a victor.

The hero's journey encompasses an experience of growth and transformation. It has become a fundamental part of storytelling in motion pictures because its structure engages

and inspires audiences. These stories work across cultures and time periods because they resonate with universally shared experiences. Luke Skywalker, Harry Potter, and Katniss Everdeen transcend history, geography, language, gender, and social class because they are heroes out of our collective mythology and their journey reflects our universal humanity.

Archetypes

Archetypes are patterns that have been repeated throughout human history and culture. They represent fundamental human experiences and emotions that are deeply ingrained in our collective unconscious. Archetypes can be found in literature, art, and drama, including cinema. The hero, villain, and outcast are just a few examples of the archetypes that can be found in countless films. Archetypes serve as universal symbols and patterns that reflect fundamental human experiences and emotions. They allow us to relate to characters and stories on a deeper level and can help us better understand our own lives and experiences.

Hero

One of the most common archetypes found in cinema is the hero. He or she is the protagonist who goes on a journey or quest, overcoming challenges and obstacles along the way. The hero is a symbol of bravery, determination, and self-sacrifice, and represents the desire for adventure and the pursuit of a greater good. The hero archetype can be found in countless films, from classic Westerns like *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) to contemporary superhero movies like *Black Panther* (2018) and *Spider-Man* (2002).

Villain

Another prevalent archetype in cinema is the villain. Sometimes called the shadow, the villain is the antagonist who opposes the hero and represents evil, corruption, or destruction. The villain can take many forms, from a classic megalomaniacal mastermind like Dr. No in the James Bond films, to more complex characters like the Joker in *The Dark Knight* (2008). The villain archetype represents the darker side of human nature in the struggle between good and evil.

Mentor

The mentor archetype is also common in cinema, representing a wise and experienced figure who guides and teaches the hero. The mentor provides the hero with the knowledge and tools needed to complete their quest and often serves as a symbol of hope and inspiration. Iconic examples of the mentor archetype in cinema include Yoda in *Star Wars* (1977) and Morpheus in *The Matrix* (1999).

Damsel

The damsel in distress is another archetype that has a long history in cinema although in recent years has been criticized for robbing female characters of agency and self-reliance. The damsel in distress represents a female character who is rescued by the hero, often serving as a plot device to motivate the hero's actions. Princess Leia in *Star Wars* (1977) is a classic example of this archetype. Recent films reflect a shift toward stronger and more empowered female characters, such as Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games* (2012) and the title character in *Wonder Woman* (2017).

Outcast

The archetype of the outcast is also frequently used in cinema. The outcast is a character who is different or unique in some way, often ostracized or rejected by society. This archetype represents the struggle for individuality and acceptance and can be found in films like *The Breakfast Club* (1985) and *Edward Scissorhands* (1990). In classic Westerns, the outcast is often literally an outlaw living outside the civilized world of the frontier settlement with its laws and moral code of "proper" behavior. These include the antiheroes of *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966), *The Wild Bunch* (1969), and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969).

Shapeshifter

The shapeshifter can change form and is often a liminal figure that exists between different realms of being. Vampires, werewolves, and superheroes are all shapeshifters. Their deceptive appearance can hide both good and evil intentions. This archetype is increasingly

visible in Hollywood films. The cyborg assassin in *The Terminator* (1984) is a shapeshifter. Mystique in the *X-Men* series and Seraph from *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003) can change their appearance at will. Professor Lupin in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004) and Loki in *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017) are also classic examples of shapeshifters.

Trickster

Tricksters are subversive figures that use humor to disarm their opponents. They can be helpful or harmful but are generally a source of pranks and chaos. They often embody paradoxical qualities and navigate the world through cleverness and cunning. The Genie in *Aladdin* (1992), Tyler Durden in *Fight Club* (1999), and Jack Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003) all represent the trickster archetype.

Symbols

Symbols are one of the most important and powerful elements in cinema. A symbol is a physical object or image that represents an abstract idea or concept. In movies, symbols can be used to signal complex emotions, themes, and messages in a visual and memorable way. They are used to convey deeper meanings and ideas that may be difficult to express through dialogue or action. For example, the recurring image of the rose in *American Beauty* (1999) represents the beauty and fragility of life, as well as the main character's search for meaning. Similarly, the spinning top in *Inception* (2010) is a symbol of the hero's quest for reality and truth which is embodied in the film's ambiguous ending.

Symbols can be used to create a sense of continuity and unity throughout a film. A recurring image or object can serve as a thread that ties different scenes and characters together, creating a cohesive experience for the audience. For example, the suitcase in *Pulp Fiction* (1994) appears in several different stories and serves as a symbol within the film's interconnected narrative structure.

Symbols can also evoke emotion and create a visceral reaction in the audience. A powerful and evocative image can stay with the viewer long after the film has ended, leaving a lasting mark and influencing their perception of the story and its themes. For example, the image of the black monolith in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) represents the unknowable and transcendent nature of human existence and leaves a profound and haunting impression.

A director can use symbols to subvert expectations and challenge traditional narrative structures. They can be used to introduce a sense of ambiguity or uncertainty into the story, encouraging the viewer to interpret the film in different ways and question their assumptions and preconceptions. For example, the white rabbit in *Donnie Darko* (2001) represents the mysterious and inexplicable nature of time and reality, encouraging the audience to consider the philosophical and metaphysical implications of the film's narrative.

Symbols are a fundamental and indispensable element in cinema. They play a vital role in conveying deeper meanings, creating continuity, evoking emotion, and challenging traditional narrative structures. They not only enrich the storytelling experience but also provide an opportunity for viewers to engage with the themes and ideas presented in the film on a deeper and more meaningful level.

Metaphors

Like symbols, metaphors are a powerful literary device that can be used to convey complex ideas and emotions through indirect comparisons. In contemporary cinema, filmmakers use metaphors in a variety of ways to create deeper meanings and connections within their stories. It is a common way to embed powerful social and political messages within the narrative. In *Get Out* (2017), for example, the "sunken place" serves as a metaphor for the Black experience in contemporary American society. The metaphor allows the audience to empathize with the main character's struggle and understand its social and political implications. Similarly, in *Parasite* (2019), the metaphor of the underground bunker represents the social and economic divide that exists in Korean society, highlighting the contrast between the affluent and the poor.

Metaphors can also be used to convey emotional or psychological states. In *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), the metaphor of erasing memories serves as a reminder of the pain and trauma that comes after a failed relationship. The use of metaphor in this film creates a powerful impact that connects the audience with the protagonist's emotional experience.

Metaphors can also be used to subvert expectations. In *Mulholland Drive* (2001), the metaphor of the blue key represents the unknown and inexplicable. This use of metaphor encourages the audience to interpret the film in different ways and consider the larger implications of the story.

Another way in which metaphors are used in contemporary cinema is to create visual and thematic motifs that run throughout the film. In *Moonlight* (2016), for example, the metaphor of the moon serves as a visual and thematic motif that ties together the different

stages of the main character's life. This use of metaphor creates a more cohesive and memorable experience for the audience and enhances their engagement with the story.

Motifs

While symbols directly represent a thing or idea and metaphors create a more general allusion to a theme, motifs refer to any recurring visual or auditory element in a film. Motifs are an essential element in motion picture entertainment, as they provide cohesion and reinforce a film's central themes and ideas.

Motifs are used to create continuity and unity within a film. For example, recurring images or sounds tie disparate scenes and characters together, creating a sort of psychic bridge for the audience. For example, the use of red in *Schindler's List* (1993) serves as a motif that ties together different scenes of violence and suffering, creating an emotional impact. In *Casablanca* (1942), Max Steiner's soundtrack uses the jazz song *As Time Goes By* as a recurring sound motif that comes to represent the love between Rick and Ilse.

Motifs can also be used to reinforce the central themes and ideas of a film. A recurring visual or auditory element can serve as a symbolic representation of the film's key message, creating a deeper and more meaningful connection between the audience and the story. For example, in *The Godfather* (1972), the motif of oranges is used to represent death and foreshadow the demise of certain characters, creating an impression of tragic inevitability that coincides with the film's themes of power and corruption.

Motifs also create rhythm and pacing in a film. A recurring visual or auditory element creates a pattern that punctuates the film's narrative, adding to its structure and momentum. For example, in *Jaws* (1975), the musical motif associated with the shark is used to build tension and suspense, punctuating the narrative with moments of intense excitement and fear.

In addition to building emotional depth and complexity in a film, a recurring visual or sound element can serve as a subtle cue to the audience, inviting them to consider the deeper emotional and psychological implications of the film's story. For example, in *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) and *Life is Beautiful* (1997), the motif of opera music serves as a representation of hope and redemption, creating emotional depth and resonance that elevates the films' central themes.

4 | Light

Camera Obscura ◆ Photography ◆ Cinematography

"Embrace light. Admire it. Love it. But above all, know light."

—George Eastman

What is light? Energy. Specifically, waves of electromagnetic energy traveling at a speed of 186,000 miles a second. It is fundamental to life on Earth and something akin to magic. Plants convert sunlight into the building blocks of all life on the planet. Light from long-dead stars travels in a straight line across the vacuum of space for millions of years before reaching our eyes. It is the basis of our concept of hours and days, seasons, and years. It is crucial for the visual arts—from architecture and sculpture to painting and photography. Of all the arts, cinema has the most fundamental connection to light. Motion pictures depend on light in two ways. First, light is essential to illuminate the subject so an image can be recorded on film or digital media. Second, light is the vehicle for projecting that image onto a screen. The history of cinema is inextricably interwoven with advances in technology that allowed for new ways of capturing and transmitting light.

Camera Obscura

Long before photographic technology appeared on the scene, artists and scientists used primitive devices to observe and record images using light. The most prominent of these

is known as a *camera obscura* (Latin for dark chamber), and you can easily make one at home. Go to your local appliance store and pick up a refrigerator box. Tape up any gaps in the cardboard so it is completely dark inside. Climb into the dark box with a sharp object and poke a single hole in one wall of the box. A beam of light from outside will enter and project (upside-down) a perfect reproduction of whatever is outside. Magic, right?

The *camera obscura* has been employed for millennia. Aristotle is said to have used one to observe the solar eclipse. Starting in the sixteenth century, they became popular with artists as an aid to drawing and painting. Around the same time, the magic lantern came into use. This was an early type of image projector using a light source, a glass slide, and a lens. The *camera obscura* and magic lantern are the precursors of the motion picture camera and movie projector. Taken together, these two devices were the first step in the evolution of cinema.

The word photography comes from the Greek and literally means light (photo) writing (graphy). While the *camera obscura* could capture an image, it was unable to create a durable record. It wasn't until the beginning of the nineteenth century that a British inventor named Thomas Wedgewood discovered that a coating of silver nitrate would render a piece of paper (or any other material) sensitive to light. He made the first primitive photographs by placing objects on a silver-coated surface and exposing it to direct sunlight. Seminal photographers like Louis Daguerre, Henry Fox Talbot, and Nicéphore Niépce developed techniques and processes that allowed them to record and fix images captured by the *camera obscura*. Known variously as "daguerreotypes," "photogenic drawing," and "heliographs," these early prototypes required extremely long exposure times (up to eight hours) to register an image.

Silver Images

Through trial and error, early photographic pioneers discovered that a silver-plated surface sensitized with iodine vapor and developed using mercury vapor could be "fixed" with salt water to produce an enduring photographic record. Louis Daguerre's 1838 image of a street scene in Paris is generally considered to be the first photograph with human subjects. These early photographs became an international sensation and the technology that produced them was soon replicated around the world.

The next major step toward motion pictures occurred half a century later in 1878 on a racetrack located on what is now the campus of Stanford University. An eccentric photographer named Eadweard Muybridge strung two dozen cameras along the track with trip wires linked to the shutter of each device. The result was a sequential series of photographs taken a fraction of a second apart showing the progress of a horse running down the track. A moving picture.

Flying Horse

People were astonished to see all four of the horse's hooves off the ground at the same time—a thousand pounds of horseflesh literally flying untethered to the earth. This made Muybridge famous and led to an elaborate series of "motion studies" of human and animal subjects performing a variety of athletic and quotidian feats. He copied his serial photography onto discs designed to be played back on a device of his own invention, which he called the zoopraxiscope. When the series of photographs was played back in sequence on this device, it created the illusion of movement.

Unsolved Mystery

A decade later, a Frenchman named Louis Le Prince built a single-lens camera and used it to make a brief silent movie of people walking in a garden. As the oldest movie in existence, *Roundhay Garden Scene* (1888) appears as proof that Le Prince deserves credit for inventing the first movie camera. Eager for the masses to witness this invention, Le Prince arranged to rent a mansion in New York as a venue to publicly screen his films for the first time. He told friends of his plan to move to New York. However, before leaving, he traveled to Dijon on family business. On his return to Paris by train, he disappeared without a trace. In 1891, shortly after Le Prince's disappearance, Thomas Edison announced that he'd invented a motion picture camera. Edison made a fortune, and Louis Le Prince's name has largely been forgotten.

Zoopraxiscope to *Cinématographe*

It is quite possible that at some point, Muybridge paid a visit to Edison's laboratory in West Orange, New Jersey. It would be a logical progression to marry his zoopraxiscope with Edison's phonograph to play images and sound simultaneously. However, this marriage of sound and image would not occur until decades later. Instead, Edison, in collaboration with W.K.L. Dickson, produced a motion picture camera dubbed the kinetograph, which employed flexible photographic roll film developed by George Eastman. Known as nitrate film, this was tougher and cheaper than the alternatives and became the standard for motion pictures until the 1950s even though it was composed of highly flammable nitrocellulose (also known as guncotton) treated with camphor. Edison also created a device he called

the kinetoscope that allowed audience members to view his "movies" through a peephole. This marked the transition from photography (light writing) to cinematography (motion writing).

Meanwhile, in Europe, French brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière came up with a motion picture system of their own called the *cinématographe*, which could record, process, and project motion pictures. They produced a series of short films between 1895 and 1905 and held what was probably the first public screening of a projected film. The story goes that one of their short films, *L'Arrivee d'un train en gare de la Ciotat* (1895), depicting a train steaming straight at the camera, so overwhelmed audiences unaccustomed to motion pictures that they ran screaming from the venue. In the years that followed, the Lumière brothers took their show on the road and screened films for audiences in London, New York, Bombay, and Buenos Aires. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the new art form of cinema had spread worldwide like the seeds of a milkweed pod.

Ironically, the Lumière brothers never thought of their invention as much more than a novelty that the public would soon grow tired of watching. After all, why pay money to watch a moving picture when you can witness the real thing for free? By 1905, they had abandoned moviemaking to focus their energy on developing a process for making colored photographs.

Vampires, Fairies, and Demons

The potential of this new technology was immediately apparent to another Frenchman named George Méliès, a stage magician and owner of the Parisian Théâtre Robert-Houdin. Upon seeing a demonstration of the *cinématographe*, Méliès offered the Lumières a handsome sum to use one of their machines but they refused to relinquish their invention. Instead, Méliès was obliged to travel to London and acquire a similar device developed by Robert W. Paul called an *animatograph*. He modified the device to function as a motion picture camera and began making films of his own.

Unlike the Lumière brothers and Edison (who were content to film everyday life), George Méliès was a showman. He understood the power of dramatic storytelling. This made all the difference. By the time the Lumières were leaving the movie business, Méliès' career as a filmmaker was taking off. He directed over 500 films between 1896 and 1913.

Whereas the Lumières were documentarians, Méliès was a master of theatricality and spectacle. He used his skills as a magician and the possibilities of the new medium to create fabulous, dream-like adventures. Méliès' films are populated by fairies, vampires,

hypnotists, demons, and peeping toms. Wizards traveled to the moon and battled aliens; women turned into men and men became skeletons; travelers were attacked by giant bedbugs; and the sun swallowed a flying train.

Black Maria

Edison's film studio also began producing films at a manic pace—1,200 in all. He built a soundstage dubbed the "Black Maria" (pronounced mah-RYE-ah) because of its resemblance to a police paddy wagon of the same name. It was mounted on rail tracks so that it could rotate to follow the sun—the main light source used in those early films. Edison also hired Edwin S. Porter, a former projectionist with an uncanny understanding of what appealed to audiences. Like the Lumière brothers, most of Edison's early films simply documented real life. Porter took up where Edison left off. He understood the power of story and used that understanding to capture audience interest in films like *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) and *Life of an American Fireman* (1903). Soon, Porter was the most influential filmmaker in America. He pioneered the use of parallel editing, transitional dissolves, and intertitle cards to help the audience understand the flow of the story on screen.

Wary of competition and piracy, Edison founded the Motion Picture Patents Company to protect his patents and intellectual property. However, his plan backfired. Rather than put up with Edison's aggressive demands for fees to license his processing and projection equipment on the East Coast, many of his competitors simply pulled up stakes and went as far as they could in the opposite direction from Edison's New Jersey headquarters: Southern California. What they found was a paradise for motion picture production: a year-round temperate climate, varied geography including deserts, mountains, oceans, and forests . . . and cheap land. They never looked back. By 1915, the motion picture industry's migration was well underway, with major film companies relocating from the East Coast to Southern California. Hollywood was born.

Movies Are Light

Then, as now, movies depended on light. In the early days, the sun was the main light source for all film productions. The first film stocks were extremely slow, requiring intense light to register an image. The director would often operate the camera. As more light-sensitive film was developed, the sun was replaced by a variety of artificial light sources.

The cameraman's position took on additional responsibilities and evolved into what we now call the cinematographer or director of photography (DP for short).

The DP oversees lighting and camera along with the support crews working in those areas. They are also responsible for selecting the camera and lenses, the film stock or digital sensor, and all the lighting equipment used on set. On a large production, the camera crew may include multiple camera operators, digital engineers, focus pullers, film loaders, slate operators, dolly grips, and Steadicam technicians. The lighting crew may include the gaffer (chief electrician), best boy (assistant to the gaffer), and an army of lighting technicians. The cinematographer oversees this small army.

Film lighting comes in two basic flavors: natural (e.g., the sun) and artificial (e.g., studio lighting). There are a wide range of artificial lighting options, but they fall under two broad categories: floods (which flood the scene with light) and spots (which provide the ability to focus the light on a specific area). Artificial light can be produced using different systems. These include LEDs, fluorescents, HMIs, and tungsten quartz halogen. Each light source, whether natural or artificial, produces light of a distinct intensity or temperature, which is measured in degrees Kelvin. For example, a match burns at approximately 1,700 degrees Kelvin, whereas vertical daylight is close to 6,000 degrees Kelvin. Each artificial light source has its own temperature that determines the color of the light. The ratio is counterintuitive. The cooler the light temperature, the warmer the color (more red). The hotter the light temperature, the cooler the color (more blue). While the newest digital motion picture cameras automatically adjust for different light temperatures, the cinematographer will often deliberately use lighting temperature to establish the mood or feeling of a scene. The use of yellow light in *Apocalypse Now* (1979), blue light in *Blade Runner* (1980), and contrasting warm and cool light sources in *Drive* (2011) elegantly illustrate this technique.

High Key versus Low Key

Regardless of the light source, lighting in most scenes can be described as either high key or low key. When the lighting is high key, everything in the scene is brightly illuminated with a minimum of shadows. In contrast, low-key lighting features very distinct shadows and areas of the frame that are obscured by darkness. High-key lighting is often used in comedies and action films, whereas low-key lighting is a common choice for drama, horror, and thrillers. There are both practical and psychological reasons for this distinction. Action films often feature elaborate (and expensive) stunts or set pieces. The director wants

the audience to see every inch of the frame to fully appreciate the action taking place on screen. The *Fast and Furious* franchise, the *Transformers* franchise, and most any film by Michael Bay illustrate the use of high-key lighting to illuminate and accentuate action. In comedy, the goal is to put the audience at ease, so they are prepared to laugh at the slightest provocation. *Dumb and Dumber* (1994), *There's Something About Mary* (1998), and *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* (2013) all use high-key lighting to this end.

On the other hand, low-key lighting takes advantage of a basic human instinct. We are hardwired for survival. Consciously or unconsciously, we constantly scan our environment for danger. You may not be aware of it, but every time you enter a room you survey your surroundings for mortal danger. Is there a wild animal nearby? Does someone have a weapon? Is there a heavy object that could fall on you or fire that could burn you or a sharp object that could cut you? This mental survey takes place automatically in a second or two. If your survival instinct gives you the "all clear," you relax and let your guard down. This isn't possible if there are areas of darkness or shadow. You remain in some degree of fight or flight mode. That is why haunted houses on Halloween are scary: you don't know what lurks in the shadows. Horror movies and thrillers operate on the same principle. They use low-key lighting to keep the audience in fight or flight mode. It's why we jump out of our seats when the killer suddenly appears from the shadows wielding a kitchen knife. Thanks to willing suspension of disbelief, we experience the scene as if we are there on the screen with our hero or heroine. The director of a thriller or horror film wants to make the audience uncomfortable—to put us on the edge of our seats. To this end, they manipulate us using the psychological power of darkness. *The Exorcist* (1973), *Halloween* (1978), *Scream* (2011), and *Hostel* (2006) all use low-key lighting to psychologically manipulate the audience in this way.

Chiaroscuro

Lighting for motion pictures draws from thousands of years of visual art. The aesthetics and mood of a painting are largely determined by the lighting. For example, the use of *chiaroscuro* (literally, "light and dark") in masterpieces of painters like Rembrandt and Caravaggio inspires the high-contrast, low-key lighting design of films like *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), *Citizen Kane* (1941), and *Casablanca* (1942). These examples are all black-and-white films, and for many purists, they represent the pinnacle of cinematic art. Indeed, there are those (Thomas Edison among them) who maintain that the best films were made before the distraction of sound and color.

Regardless of whether a film is silent or sound, black and white or color, light is still the key instrument in the cinematographer's tool kit. It directs the attention of the audience to the most important element in the frame, usually the face of an actor. Light can also be used expressionistically to reveal the emotion or psychology of a character through the amount, quality, and direction of the lighting.

Flags, Snoots, and Gobos

There are directors like John Ford and Terrence Mallick who are known for their extensive use of natural light. This requires an arsenal of cinematographic tools to modify and direct the powerful light of the sun. Just as Edison created his Black Maria sound stage on rail tracks to follow the sun, these modern masters employ diffusion (material placed between the light source and the subject) and reflection (reflective surfaces of different sizes and angles) to manipulate the direction and intensity of the sunlight to achieve their desired lighting effects.

Diffusion and reflection are also used with artificial light, along with a cornucopia of esoteric devices from barn doors and French flags to snoots (metal tubes) and gobos (patterned stencils) designed to channel light with artful precision. The lighting style in most commercial Hollywood films is known as "three-point" lighting, which consists of a key light, a fill light, and a backlight. The key light is the strongest light source, and it is placed at a 45-degree angle on one side of the subject. This will naturally produce a shadow on the opposite side, which is then filled by a second light known appropriately as the fill. The fill light is about half as strong as the key light and positioned at a 45-degree angle on the opposite side. The third light in a three-point lighting set-up is the back light, sometimes called a rim light or a kicker. It outlines the subject and sets them apart from the background, creating visual depth. The back light is generally placed behind the subject facing the fill light.

Lighting angle, like camera angle, impacts the way we view a character. Classic three-point Hollywood lighting produces even, symmetrical lighting that illuminates the subject, sets them apart from the background, and subtly models their facial features. In contrast, simple frontal lighting creates a harsh, flat look. Backlighting alone casts the subject in silhouette. Lighting from below, sometimes called Halloween lighting, creates a sinister look. In addition, the quality of the light can be adjusted using diffusion to go from very soft (suitable for romantic scenes) to very hard (best reserved for crime movies and gritty dramas).

Camera

Finally, there is the device that makes motion pictures possible: the camera. It is our avatar in the motion picture story; the passage through which we enter the cinematic world. Movie cameras have come a long way from the *camera obscura*, kinetograph, *cinématographe*, and animatograph. The newest cinema cameras record their images not on a strip of celluloid but through a digital sensor at resolutions far beyond what was possible with photochemical film. They are made by companies like Arri and RED and look more like control modules for the International Space Station than traditional film cameras. However, these futuristic marvels rely on the same principles as the primitive box camera employed by Louis Daguerre over 180 years ago. The quality of the image results from a combination of factors: (1) the film gauge or sensor size (35mm being the traditional standard), (2) the light sensitivity of the recording medium (measured as ASA or ISO), (3) the size of the aperture (the opening that lets light in, commonly measured in f-stops from f1.2 to f32—the larger the number the smaller the opening), and (4) the shutter speed (how long the shutter remains open to let light in—currently ranging from 1/32,000th of a second to an unlimited length of time for long exposure) and frame rate (traditionally twenty-four frames per second). The interplay of these factors can create an almost infinite variety of visual interpretations of the same subject.

Film Gauge or Sensor Size

Gauge refers to the physical size of the film or digital sensor, measured diagonally from the lower left to the upper right. Historically, popular film gauges included 8mm (primarily used for home movies), 16mm (used for documentaries and independent productions), 35mm (the standard for most studio films), 70mm (typically reserved for spectacle films), and IMAX. The larger the gauge, the higher the resolution when the image is projected on a screen.

Film Speed

Next, there's the sensitivity of the film or digital sensor. This is referred to as film speed (not to be confused with shutter speed), and it is measured in ASA (America Standards Association) or ISO (International Organization for Standardization). A slow film/sensor

setting (e.g., 100ASA/ISO) requires a lot of light for adequate exposure but produces a sharp image with intense colors. A fast film/sensor setting (e.g., 1,600ASA/ISO) needs very little light for adequate exposure but the resulting image shows film grain or digital noise and tends to have less intense colors.

Aperture

Aperture size is measured in f-stops from f1.2 (letting in virtually all light) to f32 (severely restricting the amount of light entering the camera). Using a low f-stop (a small number) permits the cinematographer to isolate a specific area in focus and blur everything in front and behind that area. This allows the camera to focus our attention on a single part of the frame (e.g., a character's facial reaction) without the distraction of other elements in the scene. The low f-stop also allows the maximum amount of light to enter the camera.

In contrast, a high f-stop produces a sharply defined image with great depth of field. In other words, everything in the frame remains in focus from the nearest foreground to the deepest background. This allows for deep-focus composition in which action occurs in multiple parts of the frame at the same time. Orson Welles went to great lengths to achieve this effect in the making of his landmark masterpiece *Citizen Kane* (1941).

Shutter Speed

Shutter speed refers to how long the shutter remains open for each frame ranging from very fast (e.g., 32,000th of a second) to extremely slow. The advantage of a fast shutter speed is that it can capture an event (a race car traveling at 200mph or a hummingbird in mid-flight) at the cost of letting very little light into the camera. On the other hand, a slow shutter speed allows more light into the camera, but fast-moving objects will tend to blur. In a cinema camera, the frame rate typically ranges from twenty-four frames per second to sixty frames per second. This combines with the shutter speed to achieve a variety of visual styles from the poetic motion blur of *Chungking Express* (1994) to the disturbing staccato visuals of *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). Specialty cameras can be outfitted to capture hundreds of frames per second. When these are played back at the standard twenty-four frames per second, the effect is extreme slow motion. Conversely, a slower frame rate (say, one frame per second) will result in fast motion or time-lapse footage.

Lenses

The lens on the camera has a major impact on the type of image produced. Lenses come in four types: wide (sometimes called short), medium, telephoto (sometimes called long), and zoom. Most consumer cameras come equipped with a zoom lens, but they are rarely used in filmmaking for three reasons: (1) the image quality is generally not as good a single focal length (or "prime") lens, (2) the human eye lacks a zoom function, so camera zooms feel artificial, and (3) zoom lenses were popularized by television and are commonly associated with that medium.

Lenses are identified by the distance in millimeters from the outside glass to the film or sensor. When shooting on 35mm film stock or the equivalent digital sensor, a wide-angle lens (anything below 50mm) supplies a wide field of view with deep depth of field. A medium lens produces an image like our natural vision (approximately 50mm). A telephoto lens (anything above 50mm) compresses space and provides a telescopic view of the scene. All types of lenses have their uses in film production, but many directors prefer to alternate between wide-angle (for establishing the setting) and telephoto (for close-ups).

The director's choice of lighting design, camera position, and lens have the power to shape an audience's perception of the events on screen. Their artistic choices can transform intimacy to claustrophobia or alienation to liberation. Wielded with skill and precision, the tools of the cinematographer have the power to leave the audience with indelible images that will endure long after the film's plot has faded from memory.

5 | Darkness

Shadow • Hays Code • Blacklist

"Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is."

—Carl Jung

There is a wonderful soliloquy at the end of *No Country for Old Men* (2007) in which the sheriff played by Tommy Lee Jones recounts a dream:

> It was like we was both back in older times. And I was a-horseback, going through the mountains of a night. Going through this pass in the mountains. It was cold, and there was snow on the ground. And he rode past me and kept on going . . . never said nothing going by, just rode on past. He had his blanket wrapped around him and his head down. When he rode past, I seen he was carrying fire in a horn . . . the way people used to do, and I . . . I could see the horn from the light inside of it . . . 'bout the color of the moon. And, in the dream, I knew that he was . . . going on ahead. He was fixin' to make a fire somewhere out there in all that dark and cold. And I knew that whenever I got there, he'd be there. And then I woke up.

Movies are like that dream of light in a dark place. In our lives which are so often shadowed by the chaos and darkness of things we don't understand, they offer us a clear pattern and design. Helpless in the face of life's uncertainty, we find relief in a cinematic

parallel world where things happen for a reason and good triumphs in the end. Unlike real life, stories in reel life follow a structure that is both familiar and logical. Events proceed in a causal sequence that we can recognize and predict: A leads to B, which results in C. We take comfort in the familiarity and solace in the predictability of these patterns. Like the wish fulfillment in dreams, movies offer us excitement, happiness, security, satisfaction, and joy—if only for two hours in the darkness of a movie theater.

"What about horror films?" you might ask, ". . . or movies that deal with tragedy and loss?" These also have a powerful impact of a different sort. Rather than providing respite from the challenges of life, these films are like flight simulators for our emotions. Over two thousand years ago, Aristotle wrote about catharsis (κάθαρσις), as the "purification" of emotion through dramatic arts resulting in a feeling of renewal. Horror films, thrillers, and tragic dramas provide this cathartic experience that purges negative emotions such as fear, despair, and revulsion. They take us on an emotional and psychological roller-coaster ride in which we vicariously experience horror and trauma. By bringing these buried feelings to the surface in a safe space, drama (like psychotherapy) helps us recognize negative thoughts and feelings, purge them from our consciousness, and reenter life in better shape.

Darkness Is Key

The ritual of moviegoing and the nightly rituals of sleep are nearly identical. You enter a comfortable position, you turn out the light, and the images begin to appear. When we go to the movies, we are taking part in a collective dream. We enter a space that is dedicated to a communal ritual (much like a temple) and that serves to bond the group by way of a shared narrative reflecting a pastiche of identity: humanity, nationality, race, gender, social class—sometimes all the above.

We savor this disruption to our cherished individuality and autonomy. For a few moments, we are liberated from the tyranny of ego and sanctioned to laugh with abandon or weep freely in the company of strangers. In the cinematic temple, we can safely drop our emotional defenses and surrender to a shared experience of excitement, fear, or joy.

Darkness is the key. It provides the cover behind which we can enter that liminal state between waking and slumber. From German Expressionism to film noir to today's horror movies, the psychology of darkness has always been at work in cinema. Cinematography (the art of writing with light and motion) is often dedicated more to what is hidden by darkness than what is revealed by light.

Shadow Psychology

The first filmmakers were handicapped by slow film stock that required tremendous intensity of light to gain proper exposure. For this reason, most early films were shot using natural sunlight either on location or in a studio like Edison's first sound stage. Over time, more light-sensitive film was developed that allowed for greater flexibility in locations, camera positions, makeup, and movement. However, the psychological power of darkness remained an essential counterpoint in artful cinematic lighting.

By the 1920s, the technology of cinema had spread worldwide. Lacking any established traditions or conventions, early filmmakers were free to experiment with mise-en-scène, lighting, camera movement, blocking, and editing. As a result, visual style and iconography varied considerably from country to country.

In the 1930s, many German filmmakers fled the rising tide of intolerance and antisemitism in Europe and some of the best landed in Hollywood. They soon introduced their distinctive visual style to American audiences. The melding of these German filmmakers' dark theatricality with popular American crime films gave rise to one of the most distinctive visual styles of cinema: film noir. Literally "black film," these movies incorporated dense shadow in their mise-en-scène and dark existential themes in their stories.

Caligari to Nightcrawler

The German Expressionist classic *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) pioneered the use of darkness as an expressive element in motion pictures. The film employs darkness to enhance its nightmarish atmosphere and uses distorted sets and angular shadows to create a sense of psychological unease, reflecting the distorted reality of the narrative.

Inspired by the German Expressionist visual style, Carol Reed's *The Third Man* (1949) uses darkness to reinforce themes of moral ambiguity and deception in postwar Vienna. The film explores the gray areas between right and wrong, as characters navigate a world filled with corruption and betrayal. Dense shadows and dimly lit scenes reflect compromised ethics and the blurred line between good and evil. Pervasive darkness accentuates the danger, uncertainty, and hidden secrets lurking beneath the surface of a city mired in moral decay and disarray in the aftermath of World War II.

In *The Godfather* (1972), Francis Ford Coppola employs deep shadows and high-contrast lighting to create a *chiaroscuro* effect that enhances the drama. Dimly lit interiors, shadowy corners, and veiled faces accentuate the secretive power dynamics at play in the

criminal underworld and reflect the internal psychological struggles of the film's characters. In *Apocalypse Now* (1979), he uses darkness to reflect a journey into madness amid the horrors of war. The film's mise-en-scène is dominated by shadowy jungle landscapes and flames of guttering candles that struggle to illuminate interior shadows.

Martin Scorsese uses the night streets of New York City in *Taxi Driver* (1976) as both a setting and a visual metaphor for his protagonist's simmering homicidal rage. In *Raging Bull* (1980), he employs darkness as a visual representation of the self-destructive internal forces at work in the film's protagonist, the boxer Jake LaMotta. Deep shadows and low-key lighting reflect this character's inner turmoil while adding a brooding and gritty quality to the film's aesthetic.

In *Alien* (1979), Ridley Scott uses darkness to build tension and create claustrophobia. Dimly lit spaceship corridors and shadowy corners contribute to the film's suspenseful mood. Strategic use of darkness and shadow heightens our fear of the unseen and sharpens the lurking threat of the alien creature. Darkness is also a pervasive element in Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), where it is used as a key feature of the dystopian world of the film. The neon-lit cityscape is enveloped in perpetual darkness, as the narrative explores existential themes of identity and what it means to be human.

In David Fincher's *Se7en* (1995), darkness underscores the grim and disturbing nature of the story. The film's plot revolves around a serial killer who stages his crimes based on the seven deadly sins. Dark and rain-soaked settings create an oppressive and ominous atmosphere, reflecting the moral depravity explored in the narrative. In *The Dark Knight* (2008), he uses darkness as a recurring motif to represent the internal moral struggles of his characters. Batman operates primarily at night, utilizing darkness as both a literal and symbolic tool to fight against the criminal underworld.

Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) occupies the liminal space between reality and imagination. The film's protagonist, Ofelia, ventures into a dark labyrinth where magical creatures reside. The film's dramatic contrast between darkness and light underscores the stark divide between the harsh reality of Francoist Spain and the fantastical realm where Ofelia seeks sanctuary.

In *Nightcrawler* (2014), director Dan Gilroy uses darkness to support the theme of decay in the moral and psychological meltdown of the protagonist, Louis Bloom. Throughout the film, darkness dominates the visual composition. The use of low-light environments, shadows, and dimly lit settings creates a gritty and atmospheric mood that aligns with the film's exploration of the dark underbelly of the news media. The cinematography often contrasts bright artificial lights, such as police sirens or camera flashes, against the surrounding darkness. This stark contrast between light and dark reflects the extreme moral choices faced by the protagonist. As he chooses the morally dubious path, darkness closes in as an external expression of his deteriorating psyche.

Forbidden Pleasures

From its inception in the teens with films like *In Old California* (1910) and *The Squaw Man* (1914), Hollywood quickly became the capital of American cinema with all the glamour and star power associated with the movies. The motion picture industry embodied the hedonistic excess of the Roaring Twenties with its passion for lavish parties and forbidden pleasures. The film *Babylon* (2023), set during this period, portrays the orgiastic bacchanals held by powerful producers within the walls of their posh Bel-Aire estates and examines the sordid personal lives of early movie directors and stars.

The glamour and excess of early Hollywood gave birth to a string of scandals that made headlines from coast-to-coast. In 1921, popular screen comedian Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle was charged with rape and manslaughter after the death of actress Virginia Rappe at one of his wilder parties. The following year, director William Desmond Taylor was murdered in his home and the investigation uncovered tales of drug use, blackmail, and sexual affairs. His killer was never found. Even lovable stars like Charlie Chaplin were known for their dissolute lifestyles and scandalous affairs. The films of that era freely depicted graphic violence, explicit sexual content, and other taboo subjects such as prostitution, drug abuse, and infidelity.

Moral Outrage

A different kind of darkness soon overshadowed the American movie business. When moral outrage over the "corrupting influence" of early films threatened to derail the Hollywood gravy train by alienating conservative audiences in the heartland, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) was formed to run roughshod over unruly elements in the industry. They succeeded in facilitating the birth of the studio system which came to control every facet of the business. The "Big Five" (Warner Brothers, RKO, Paramount, MGM, and 20th Century Fox) and the "Little Three" (Columbia, United Artists, and Universal) soon dominated Hollywood. In control of the entire supply chain, the major studios were able to micromanage every stage of production and exhibition. Writers, directors, actors, crew, and editors were all put under contract. The "product" was tightly controlled from inception through the theatrical exhibition. This allowed the MPPDA to rein in independents and effectively crush competition from producers outside their circle.

By the mid-twenties, the popular perception of Hollywood as a den of immorality had reached a tipping point. Political pressure mounted and censorship bills began to appear at

the state level. The prospect of having to navigate a patchwork of inconsistent and shifting decency laws to screen their films was anathema to the now-consolidated motion picture industry. The MPPDA determined that self-censorship was the answer.

Hays Code

The Hollywood studios hired Presbyterian elder Will H. Hays to create a formula of "don'ts" and "be carefuls" for all Hollywood productions. These comprised eleven subjects best avoided and twenty-six to be handled with care. By 1930, these were codified into a document affirmed by the heads of all the Hollywood studios. The goal was to avoid direct government intervention in the motion picture industry, but the result was four decades of film censorship.

After the production code was introduced by the MPPDA in 1930, it was quickly endorsed by executives at the studios. However, enforcement was not immediate. The stock market crash in 1929, and the economic impact of the Great Depression put pressure on the studios to maximize ticket sales and nothing sells like sex. As a result, films released between 1930 and 1933 were some of the most risqué in Hollywood history, including *Scarface* (1932) a gangster movie loosely based on the rise and fall of Al Capone; *Red Dust* (1932), a steamy thriller featuring an erotic love triangle; and *Baby Face* (1933) about a woman who uses sex to achieve social and financial success.

By 1933, the Catholic Legion of Decency threatened a nationwide boycott if the studios continued to violate the code. In response, the MPPDA mandated that every film exhibited in an American theater must obtain a seal of approval from the Production Code Administration. By the summer of 1934, the Hays Code was in force and remained so until 1968.

Blacklist

The Motion Picture Production Code and three decades of censorship that followed were not the darkest chapters in Hollywood history. That dubious distinction belongs to the Hollywood "Blacklist." The motion picture business hit its spiritual nadir during the years surrounding the Second World War. Two major film industry strikes occurred during the 1930s involving Hollywood workers' unions, in particular the Writers Guild of America. The strikes generated heated tension between the studios and newly unionized workers.

Red Scare

During the war and at the height of the Great Depression, the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) had significant support within the unions. In 1938, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) released a report stating that communism had taken hold in Hollywood. John L. Leech, a former Communist Party member, gave private testimony to the chairman of the committee naming forty-two movie industry figures whom he identified as Communists. These included major stars such as Humphry Bogart, James Cagney, and Katherine Hepburn.

Witch Hunt

This led to the HUAC chair meeting privately with those accused and either "clearing" them or confirming the accusations which lead to their summary dismissal and blacklisting from future employment in the industry. By 1941, the bad blood between the studios and their workers over unionization metastasized into a witch hunt. Walt Disney accused striking cartoonists and animators of being duped by Communist agitators. This was followed by a California Senate investigation into "Reds in the Movies." A member of HUAC called a press conference to state that ". . . one of the most dangerous plots ever instigated for the overthrow of this Government has its headquarters in Hollywood . . . the greatest hotbed of subversive activities in the United States."

In 1946 and 1947 issues of *The Hollywood Reporter*, the publisher printed columns naming a range of Hollywood notables as Communist sympathizers. Drawing on this list, HUAC began issuing subpoenas. Writers, directors, actors, and producers were called to testify. Walt Disney and Ronald Reagan opened the hearings by testifying that Communists within the motion picture industry posed a grave threat to the nation. They proceeded to call out their colleagues by name. In 1947, the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals (co-founded by Walt Disney) issued literature telling producers to avoid anything sympathetic to communism in their films such as "Don't smear wealth," "Don't smear industrialists," "Don't deify the 'common man'," and "Don't glorify the collective."

The Hollywood Ten

Out of forty-three individuals called to testify before HUAC, nineteen stated that they would not give evidence. Eleven of these nineteen "unfriendly witnesses" were called and all but one (playwright Bertolt Brecht) refused to cooperate citing their rights under the

First Amendment. Alvah Bessie, Herbert Biberman, Lester Cole, Edward Dmytryk, Ring Lardner, Jr., John Howard Lawson, Albert Maltz, Samuel Ornitz, Adrian Scott, and Dalton Trumbo were accused of contempt of Congress and charged as criminals.

Rather than rally in support of their own, the Hollywood studios bent over backward to demonstrate their patriotism. The president of the Association of Motion Picture Producers and Motion Picture Association of America (a rebranding of the MPPDA) declared that he would never "employ any proven or admitted Communist because they are just a disruptive force, and I don't want them around." He later issued a statement that the unfriendly witnesses cited by Congress would be fired or suspended without pay and never reemployed. The Hollywood Blacklist was born.

In the years since that shameful chapter, numerous films have examined the devastating impact of the Blacklist on innocent writers, directors, actors, and producers. *The Front* (1976) is a satirical comedy-drama that delves into the Hollywood Blacklist through the lens of a struggling, unassuming cashier (played by Woody Allen) who agrees to "front" for blacklisted writers by submitting their scripts as his own. The film humorously exposes the absurdity and injustice of the era. In *Guilty by Suspicion* (1991), Robert De Niro plays a successful director who faces scrutiny and pressure to name names during the Red Scare. It portrays the internal struggle and emotional toll experienced by those forced to choose between personal integrity and professional survival. *Good Night, and Good Luck* (2005) focuses on the courageous efforts of CBS journalist Edward R. Murrow during the height of the Red Scare. The movie explores the moral dilemmas faced by those in the media industry and the challenges of speaking out against McCarthyism. *Trumbo* (2015) tells the story of Dalton Trumbo, one of the most prominent screenwriters affected by the Blacklist. Bryan Cranston delivers a powerful performance as Trumbo, capturing his resilience and determination to continue working despite all obstacles.

6 | Sound

Dialogue ◆ Music ◆ Sound Effects

"A film is—or should be—more like music than like fiction."

—Stanley Kubrick

Close your eyes. Listen. What do you hear? Birdsong? Traffic? Wind in the trees? Refrigerator hum? Snatches of EDM from a passing car? These and sounds like them comprise the random audio track of real life. However, movies craft meaning by weaving these sounds into a dense sonic tapestry, adding dialogue, Foley effects, and musical score. All these soundtrack elements are then carefully mixed to support the images on screen and provide emotional cues to the audience for each moment of the film. Audiences will often tolerate grainy images, shaky camera, and jarring edits if the film sound is sharp and clear. However, the opposite is seldom true. No matter how beautiful the image, the audience will soon walk out if the sound is too loud or too soft, distorted, or out of sync.

Film sound (and every other cinematic element) can be designated as "diegetic" or "nondiegetic." A movie's story world and all it contains is called its diegesis. Anything originating in that realm is diegetic. Dialogue and most sound effects are diegetic. Score music and voice-over narration are common examples of nondiegetic elements. Directors often play with our expectations when it comes to the diegesis. For example, there's a pivotal scene in *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) in which Mr. Blonde tortures a captive policeman. Midway through the scene, Mr. Blonde asks his victim, "You ever listen to K-Billy's *Super*

Sounds of the Seventies?" He then tunes an old radio (that just happens to be on the workbench beside him) to that program. The score music that follows is diegetic because we see the source in the scene.

Silence to Sound

The first movies were silent. In the great movie palaces, an orchestra played the soundtrack. In humbler venues, there might be a player piano. Dialogue and key plot information were communicated via title cards printed on the screen. When Thomas Edison invented his movie camera, he envisioned an art form unencumbered by sound. After *The Jazz Singer* (1927) premiered with synchronized sound, Edison's reaction was unequivocal: sound would ruin the movies. He believed that it would trivialize and degrade what was intended to be a purely visual medium. Perhaps this reaction is not surprising considering that Edison, the inventor of the phonograph and many other sound-transmitting devices, was hard of hearing and had become practically deaf by the time sound movies came on the scene.

Once audiences had experienced a movie with synchronized sound, there was no going back. By the mid-1930s, all the studios had converted to the new technology and every movie played with sound. For many of the marque idols of the 1920s, this presented an existential crisis. Audiences accustomed to seeing the heroic exploits of a he-man protagonist were not prepared to accept his performance if his voice did not match that image. Sound was the death knoll for any well-known actor who spoke with a thick accent, lisp, or other speech irregularity. This is beautifully portrayed in *The Artist* (2011) which tells the story of a star from the silent era who is kicked to the curb with the coming of sound. During this period, vocal coaches were hired en masse by the studios to train their contract players in proper elocution. This is evident (sometimes to a comical degree) in films released during the first decade of sound such as *It Happened One Night* (1934), *My Man Godfrey* (1936), and *Bringing Up Baby* (1938). Many American thespians sought to emulate the transatlantic accent of actors like Cary Grant and the polished, upper crust delivery of actresses like Katharine Hepburn.

Singin' in the Rain (1952) dramatizes this period in Hollywood history. It tells the love story of silent film star Don Lockwood (Gene Kelly) and aspiring actress Kathy Selden (Debbie Reynolds) as they navigate the awkward transition to sound filmmaking. Don's silent film costar has an irredeemably vulgar and grating voice, so Kathy ends up doing voice-over recording for all her dialogue in the studio's first sound picture. When the truth comes to light, Don's costar becomes a laughingstock and Kathy's career is launched. This retelling of the advent of sound from a distance of two decades is an amusing (if historically

inaccurate) account that reveals both the difficulties and opportunities brought by sound technology. *Babylon* (2023) explores many of the same issues in a darkly humorous scene that ends with the camera operator dying of heat exhaustion in the sound-proofed camera booth.

The importance of sound in the cinematic experience can hardly be overstated. In addition to providing exposition and emotional cues, it provides texture and tone. The soundtrack of most films is a work of art in its own right—a complex composition of sound recorded on the set (usually limited to dialogue and ambient sound) with sounds licensed from sound effects libraries, unique Foley sounds created especially for the film, and a multilayered musical score.

Dialogue and Subtext

The screenwriter is the first sound artist because they create the original dialogue from scratch. In most films, every word the actors speak originates in the mind of a screenwriter. The best movie dialogue communicates meaning through subtext. The meaning is not in what is explicitly stated. Instead, the real point lies in what is implied by those words and the facial expression and body language that accompany their delivery—the implicit meaning rather than the explicit content.

For example, consider a romantic comedy in which a newly engaged American couple is given a tour of the Roman Forum by a handsome Italian tour guide. As the trio walks through the ruins, the two men get into a heated debate over the relative virtues of Italian versus American automobiles. As the young woman watches and listens with avid interest, her fiancé embarks on a passionate defense of the American car: it is solid and dependable, it always starts right up, and it gets excellent gas mileage. "Yes, yes, I'm sure that is true," responds their guide. "But aren't they a bit boring, slow, and predictable? Compare them to Italian cars—Bugatti . . . Maserati . . . Lamborghini, which are sleek, fast, and exciting . . . ."

The explicit content of this exchange is a simple conversation between two men talking about cars. However, the subtext implies something deeper. Like two roosters preening in front of a hen, they are really arguing the relative virtues of American versus Italian manhood. The actual meaning of the scene is embedded under the surface as implicit content.

The art of good screenwriting is revealing exposition in a way that is organic to the scene and therefore unnoticed by the viewer. We have all witnessed bad film writing, which is painfully "on the nose." In these films, the character states exactly what they are thinking or feeling in plain language. It is like someone explaining why a joke is funny. This is illustrated with hysterical results in *The Disaster Artist* (2017) which tells the origin

story of *The Room* (2003), a self-financed independent production that is widely considered to be the worst film ever made.

Improvisation

Directors like Martin Scorsese trust their actors to improvise dialogue on the set. Some of the most memorable lines from iconic films like *Taxi Driver* (1976) and *Raging Bull* (1980) were improvised by the actors during production. This kind of improvisation can lend immediacy and authenticity to a performance. Vivid examples include Dustin Hoffman's "I'm walking here!" reaction to nearly getting hit by a New York taxicab in *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), Joe Pesci's "Funny how?" speech in *Goodfellas* (1990), and Johnny Depp's "Jar of Dirt" monologue from *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003).

Not all directors are willing to concede creative control over the dialogue to their actors. Alfred Hitchcock complained of the difficulty of working with Method actors Montgomery Cliff in *I Confess* (1953) and Paul Newman in *Torn Curtain* (1966). Asked by talk show host Dick Cavett if it was true that he thought actors were cattle, Hitchcock corrected him. "What I said was: 'Actors should be treated like cattle'." Stanley Kubrick, director of iconic films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) was also a demanding perfectionist with little patience or indulgence for actors. He frequently insisted on dozens of takes of the same shot. He was once quoted as saying, "Actors are essentially emotion-producing instruments."

Sound Crew

The focus in recording on-set sound is to capture clean, clear dialogue. An entire production team separate from the camera crew is dedicated to acquiring dialogue and "wild" or ambient sound on the set of a movie. Typically, each actor is equipped with a small, wireless lavalier microphone to pick up their lines. In addition, a "boom" microphone records sound from a position above the actors. The boom operator has one of the most physically demanding jobs on the set because they must hold the boom pole just above the frame for extended periods of time. An observant filmgoer will occasionally notice the telltale tip of a gray boom mic dipping down into the frame.

The production sound mixer takes the feeds from all the microphones on the set and mixes them in real time, balancing the volume and quality of sound for maximum utility in

postproduction. Good dialogue recording is critical because dubbing or looping an actor's voice after the film has wrapped (known as ADR or automated dialogue replacement) is both difficult and expensive. The movement of an actor's face as they speak is recorded on camera at a rate of twenty-four frames per second. Sound is sampled at a rate of 48,000 samples per second. When they are not recorded simultaneously, it is extremely difficult to achieve a perfectly synchronized match. We have all seen examples of poorly dubbed film dialogue, and the result is often laughable. Woody Allen makes use of this effect with broad comedic results in his film *What's Up Tiger Lily?* (1966).

Other than dialogue and a limited number of wild sounds recorded at the time of production, every other sound in a film—from traffic noise to ice cubes clinking in a glass—are added in postproduction after the completion of principle photography. Most of these sounds are sourced at a sound library. The screenwriter will capitalize SOUNDS whenever possible to alert the sound designer of the sound effects that will be needed in the post. Typical examples include sounds like BOOM, CRACKLE, or SCREECH. The sound designer will make an inventory of all the images on screen that generate sound: crowds of people, footsteps, automobile traffic, keys in locks, doors opening and closing, and so on. In postproduction, they transmit that inventory to one of the sound libraries to "check out" digital files containing various versions of each of those sounds. These are added to the sound mix at the appropriate place to create the illusion that the sound corresponds to the visual element on screen.

Sound Effects

Unlike dubbing an actor's voice, sound effects can be easily adjusted to match the position in time and space of the sound source. The result is convincing but highly artificial. Nowhere is this more evident than in a scene requiring crowd noise (e.g., when a film character walks through a bustling venue like Grand Central Station). This type of sound is known as "walla," and it is created by having a group of voice performers stand in a recording studio and repeat the word "walla" over and over. This simulates crowd noise without the distracting presence of actual words. To fully appreciate the artificiality of a film soundtrack, try closing your eyes and listening to a movie without watching the corresponding images. If you listen carefully, you will notice that common sound effects like footsteps, traffic, and birdsong are *identical* from one film to the next. These sounds come from the same digital files checked out from a sound effects library. In other words, you may be watching *Jurassic Park* (1993), *Mission: Impossible* (1996), or *American Psycho* (2000) and hear the exact same sound when someone closes a door or starts a car.

Foley Art

Not all sound effects are available through a sound effects library. The sound designer for *Alien* (1979) could not call a sound library and request the sound of a baby extraterrestrial bursting through an astronaut's ribcage. By the same token, the lightsaber battles in *Star Wars* (1977) contain an entire range of sounds that had to be created from scratch. These bespoke sound effects require the services of a Foley artist. Named after the renowned sound artist Jack Foley from the early days of sound films, the Foley process consists of creating custom sounds to match unique visual elements on screen.

For pure fun, working on a Foley stage has to be one of the most pleasurable and amusing jobs in the motion picture industry. You are charged with watching a new movie and creating sounds to match what appears on the screen. Your tools are bowling balls, Wiffle bats, watermelons, Jello, sand, gravel, glass . . . an entire arsenal of sound-producing materials.

As you watch the images on screen, you try to match each action with a sound. In the case of the lightsaber, a sound artist used the hum of a film projector motor and the buzz of a microphone passing over an old TV set to make the distinctive hum-buzz of the saber. To make the sound of the alien crashing through the astronaut's chest in *Alien* (1979), the sound artist opened a can of dog food and had the contents slurp out alongside a recording microphone.

Score

The last element of the soundtrack is the musical score. In many ways, it is the most critical to the audience's understanding of the mood and tone of the picture as well as the emotions of the characters.

An executive from 20th Century Fox once screened an early print of a new movie featuring a big star before a group of graduate students at UCLA film school. She explained that the editor had put in a temporary soundtrack that would be replaced in the final sound mix. However, she wanted to get first impressions from the students in the room.

The star played a manic-depressive character prone to outrageous behaviors that could be read as comical or deeply disturbing. The temporary soundtrack contained a series of uplifting radio songs by popular recording artists like Aretha Franklin, which gave the impression that the character's behavior was fun or at least funny. When the lights came up, the film students' responses made it clear that the tone of the music did not match the tone of the story.

When the film was released a few months later, it contained a dark and nuanced symphonic score that more clearly tracked the ups and downs of mental illness, totally changing

the meaning of the film. This is not unusual. At some point in the postproduction process, most films have a temporary soundtrack. It is used as a placeholder until the final score is ready. "Temp love" is what happens when the director becomes so attached to the temporary score that they find it hard to replace it with permanent music.

Heart Strings

Perhaps the most important function of the musical score is to guide the emotions of the audience. Each instrument in the orchestra has an emotional resonance. Violins evoke sorrow, for example. Drums and trumpets signify action. Flute music makes us feel wistful or nostalgic. We share common associations with certain songs as well. Whether it is the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Billie Eilish, or Machine Gun Kelly—popular music evokes powerful emotions related to the time and place associated with the song or artist.

In many films, a singular musical motif is associated with each character. Whenever that character is present in the scene (even if they are off-screen) that unique sound signature appears. This is especially effective in horror films where the monster/killer/alien is present but concealed in the darkness for much of the narrative. A prominent example of this appears in *Jaws* (1975) where a simple alternating pattern of F and F sharp notes (dun-dum-dun-dum-dun-dum) form a familiar sound motif that signals that the creature is about to attack. Four years later, Spielberg again collaborated with composer John Williams on *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1979), and the result was the iconic five-tone motif that is instantly recognizable as the sonic link between humans and extraterrestrials in the film. Williams created an even more ambitious and sustained musical artifice in the *Star Wars* space operas (1977–2021) in which he develops dozens of distinct leitmotifs connected to specific characters and relationships.

The role of music in creating suspense, mood, and tone was succinctly described by Alfred Hitchcock in a 1933 interview for Cinema Quarterly:

> It (music) makes it possible to express the unspoken. For example, two people may be saying one thing and thinking something very different. Their looks match their words, not their thoughts. You cannot express the mood of the situation by word and photograph. But I think you could get at the underlying idea with the right background music.

There is no better illustration of the power of music to heighten suspense and drama than Bernard Herrmann's score for *Psycho* (1960). In that film, a cacophony of screeching

violins, violas, and cellos is used to punctuate a deranged killer's acts of violence. In the film's infamous shower scene, the music magnifies the horror of the moment and affects the audience at a visceral level.

Soundscape

Most movie theaters are equipped with sophisticated, multichannel sound systems and even home theaters come with five- or seven-channel sound complete with subwoofers capable of rattling windows across the street. The motion picture sound team utilizes the capabilities of these sound delivery systems to create an accurate and convincing soundscape to support the visuals on screen. Alive, clear, and natural sound supports a sense of reality in even the most far-fetched science fiction or fantasy films.

As technology advances, a growing range of delivery platforms enhance the quality and fidelity of motion picture sound both in the theater and at home. Built on the foundation of Dolby Digital Sound systems, Sony's SDDS system, and the THX sound standard pioneered by George Lucas's Lucasfilm, sound technology continues to evolve. From the first sound films of the 1920s to this year's biggest blockbuster, sound has grown to become one of the most important elements of the motion picture experience.

7 | Color

Painting ◆ Kodachrome ◆ Chromatic Language

"Color is a power which directly influences the soul."

—Wassily Kandinsky

Imagine a world without color. It recalls the dictionary definition of gray: ashes and lead; old age; things dull and nondescript. We respond to colors with our heart. Without color, we feel diminished and deprived. They evoke the entire spectrum of human emotion. They bring us joy, excitement, warmth, desire, wonder . . . as well as longing, lust, loss, and fear.

The history of cinema begins with light but ends with color. Photography was introduced as a black-and-white medium in 1839 and remained so for nearly a century. Capturing a photograph in the early days of the medium was a cumbersome and painstaking process. Early photographic pioneers were mostly concerned with the optical and chemical aspects of photography: lenses, photographic plates, and the compounds used for developing and fixing an image. At its inception, the most common application of photography was portraiture, and it was consumer demand for color portraits that led to the hand-coloring of black-and-white photographs.

Brush and Oils

When series photography made the transition to motion pictures, the technology to capture color on film had not yet been developed. Even so, the impulse to include life's colors in

the first movies was so powerful that Edison (an inventor of the movie camera) and Edwin Stanton Porter (Edison's employee and cinema pioneer) went to great lengths to add color to their films by hiring an army of artisans to paint each individual frame by hand. Remember: one second of a motion picture contains twenty-four still photographs passing in front of a projector. This means that for a single second of *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), someone had to painstakingly add pigment to twenty-four tiny frames using a magnifying glass, stencil, and horsehair brush. Each time a new color was introduced, the entire operation had to be repeated.

The Lumière Brothers caused a sensation when they premiered their first films, but they believed that "movies" were just a passing fad. They quickly turned their attention to developing a system for capturing color photographs. In 1907, their efforts resulted in the world's first practical color photographic system. Dubbed "Autochrome," the process developed by August and Louis, produced beautiful images but required long exposure times and resulted in a positive transparency rather than a photographic negative. It wasn't until 1935 that two inventors (Godowsky and Mannes) at the Kodak Research Laboratories came up with a practical color-positive film capable of capturing fine detail. They called it Kodachrome, and it would go on to be the standard for color photography for the remainder of the century.

Three-Strip Technicolor

During the same period, a three-strip Technicolor (red–green–blue) process was developed for motion pictures. It required two 35mm film negatives (one recording blue and the other red) and a third for green light. A system of filters, prism, and mirrors in the camera integrated all these colors. This technology was used masterfully in *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and *Wizard of Oz* (1939) and ten years later in classics such as *Black Narcissus* (1947) and *The Red Shoes* (1948). However, such an elaborate process was cumbersome, time-consuming, and expensive. The cameras were unwieldy and required extremely bright lights to register an image. The heat produced by the stage lighting on *Wizard of Oz* (1939) was so intense that it melted makeup on the munchkins.

Television had begun to divert moviegoers from the movie houses, and the studios were desperate to reclaim the attention of their audience. Since early television was limited to a square, black-and-white image, the studios made a major push into wide-screen and color cinematography. Finally, in 1952, Kodak introduced a high-quality, one-strip "monopack" that significantly simplified color production. This was soon followed by other proprietary systems such as Warnercolor, Metrocolor, and Pathecolor.

By the 1960s, Hollywood's entire motion picture output was produced in color. From that time through the contemporary period, films have generally employed color in a naturalistic rather than expressionistic way. However, with the advent of digital cinematography and postproduction processes, creative use of color for aesthetic and symbolic effects has become more common. Films such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), and *Hero* (2002) wowed audiences with their striking and dramatic color coding.

Language of Color

The use of color for dramatic and emotional effects has a long tradition in stage drama. Colored gels placed in front of the stage lights illuminate the performers with warm or cool light and engender feelings of comfort or alienation in the audience. Warm tones of amber and orange-red are used to create a comforting or inviting ambience. Cool tones of green, blue, or violet stoke feelings of sorrow, fear, or loss. In epic films of the last century, cinema pioneer D.W. Griffith tinted entire sequences with a single color in order to heighten the emotional impact on the audience. In *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916), scenes of loss are tinted blue and scenes of violence are tinted red. Griffith used amber to show domestic warmth and pink to telegraph innocence.

The adoption of color for motion pictures was not without opponents among artists, critics, and audiences. Objections ran the gamut from aesthetic ("color looks vulgar and gaudy") to psychological ("color distracts the eye from the essential drama"), and pragmatic ("color film is more expensive and requires more work to handle"). Early screen icon Douglas Fairbanks and Director John Huston had concerns that color on film lacked subtlety and definition. Heedless of these concerns, the public voted with their ticket-buying dollars and, following the age-old credo of commerce that "the customer is always right," the studios bowed to popular preference and made the wholesale conversion to color filmmaking.

Directors quickly adapted to the changing technology and embraced the expanded creative potential of color cinematography. Powered by the imagination of a new generation of filmmakers, color films used this new tool to connect emotionally with audiences that reacted instinctively to the language of color. In *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964), French director Jacques Demy used a brilliant, expressionistic palette to convey his film's poetic themes, while Italian horror director Dario Argento used subdued and visceral colors to creepy effect in *Suspiria* (1977). These and other directors soon realized color's power to shape mood, evoke emotion, and carry symbolic freight. Taken together, the connotations of each color form a complex visual language that can be used to underscore the theme and reinforce the drama of any film.

Color and Theme

The symbolic power of color is so pronounced that directors generally chose a primary or "key" color early in the preproduction phase. Building on this primary color motif, they may add a secondary color (and sometimes tertiary and quaternary colors as well). Most filmmakers have themes—some would say obsessions—they return to in each of their films, regardless of the genre or content. Classic themes can generally be expressed in a word or two. These include redemption, hope, courage, duality, loss, perseverance, betrayal, justice, and so on. A film's key color is determined based on the director's chosen theme.

Each color in the spectrum carries both positive and negative associations. For example, we associate red with both love (Valentine's Day) and violent anger (which we describe as "seeing red"). We connect blue with peace (the United Nations) but also sorrow (described as "feeling blue"). Yellow is the color of innocence (a child's crayon drawing of the sun) but also of power (the king's golden crown). Green represents fertility and growth but also corruption and decay. Orange signals warmth and family but also danger and destruction. We associate purple with creativity and originality but also with madness and death. Aware of this complex web of associations, the filmmaker carefully maps out a color code for each film that constantly reminds the audience of the theme in a subtle, subliminal way.

Watching a master director's body of work quickly reveals both their thematic obsessions and the key colors these inspire. For example, Francis Ford Coppola's films explore themes of innocence and power; loyalty and justice. The key colors he often uses are yellow (for innocence and power) and red (for loyalty and justice). These themes and key colors are clearly present in the *Godfather* trilogy (1972–1990) and *Apocalypse Now* (1979). The blend of these two key colors produces orange which is a signifier for family, another powerful motif that runs through all of Coppola's films.

Once the director settles on a theme and key color or colors, that information is disseminated to the entire production team from cinematographer and production designer down to costume designers and set dressers. The selected color or colors then appear everywhere: the wallpaper and carpet, the art on the wall, the upholstery on the furniture, and the costumes and accessories of the actors.

In the films of M. Night Shyamalan, themes tend toward paranormal phenomenon and the unknown. In three of his best-known films, *The Sixth Sense* (1999), *Unbreakable* (2000), and *Signs* (2002), the key color is green, which we associate with the paranormal. An observant viewer will notice that virtually everything in these films is a shade of green. At first glance, the protagonist may appear to be wearing a black jacket over a white shirt with a black tie but closer examination reveals that the jacket and tie are very dark green, while the shirt is very light green. This color coding becomes a powerful subliminal messaging tool. *The Matrix* (1999) explores similar themes with an almost identical

color palette. In *American Beauty* (1999), the director worked with master cinematographer Conrad Hall to create a variety of colored lighting schemes to reflect the emotional undercurrents of the story.

Color and Emotion

We experience color emotionally and process it through our right brain. Color connects with us on physical, mental, and spiritual planes. It is associated with the limbic system and is reflected in visualization practices in a variety of religions. In Buddhist and Hindu traditions, life energy flows through the body via a string of terminal points known as chakras. Each chakra is associated with a color. The lowest chakra is located at the base of the spine (red), the second at the sex organs (orange), the third at the navel (yellow), the fourth at the heart (green), the fifth at the throat (blue), the sixth between the eyebrows (indigo), and the highest at the crown of the head (violet).

It is no accident that color is featured prominently in the symbols of our institutions such as uniforms, crests, flags, and semaphores. It forms a silent language that wordlessly communicates authority, power, rank, nobility, position, association, caste, and party. According to tradition, the American flag's red symbolizes hardiness and valor; blue symbolizes justice, vigilance, and perseverance; and white stands for purity and innocence. The same colors on the French flag are associated with the revolutionary moto *liberté, égalité, fraternité* or freedom (blue), equality (white), and brotherhood (red). Director Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Three Colours Trilogy*: *Blue* (1993), *White* (1994), and *Red* (1994) takes its title and themes from the French flag and the revolutionary ideals it symbolizes. In the process, the director provides a striking example of the integrated use of color in mise-en-scène in support of the theme. *Blue* (1993) explores themes of freedom and sadness through a mise-en-scène suffused with blue color, from the wind chimes the protagonist carries as a talisman to the lighting and décor. In *White* (1994), he explores themes of innocence and virginity played out against a backdrop of snow, white curtains, and pale light. Finally, in *Red* (1994), the director takes on themes of loyalty and betrayal constantly reinforced by red costumes, billboards, automobiles, and traffic lights.

Red

Red is by far our most potent visual trigger. Our experience of this color in the natural world is associated with primal existential encounters with fertility, procreation, birth, survival, the hunt, violence, and death. For this reason, it immediately gets our attention. Stop

signs and fire trucks are red for this reason. We associate red with love and desire but also with violence and aggression. *Run Lola Run* (1999) is a prime example of a movie that illustrates the use of this most powerful color to support themes of loyalty, love, desire, violence, and justice.

Orange

Orange represents warmth and safety, the happiness and security of family and home. Directors and cinematographers are understandably enamored of natural "magic hour" lighting which occurs in the day's first and last hours of sunlight when rays of the sun are diffused through the greatest density of the atmosphere. This quality of light recalls the kitchen hearth and the flickering orange of a fireplace that creates a sheltering cocoon to keep the cold and darkness of the outside world at bay. However, orange also evokes the destructive power of fire and of passion raging dangerously out of control. Francis Ford Coppola takes advantage of this duality in The *Godfather* (1972). Orange appears in every scene involving future Godfather Michael Corleone and his wife Kay: sometimes in an article of clothing, other times in a curtain or an upholstered piece of furniture in the background. In these instances, orange symbolizes the family at the center of Coppola's operatic melodrama. In one of the film's climactic scenes, the reigning Godfather played by Marlon Brando crosses the street to buy a bag of oranges. As he returns to his car, a hit team attacks him with a barrage of gunfire. He falls and the oranges scatter in the street. When Michael avenges this attempt on his father's life, an orange neon sign glows behind him. The destructive power of fire is rendered more dramatic in counterpoint to its comforting familial associations. Coppola uses this color coding to even greater effect in *Apocalypse Now* (1979), which opens with a scene of the jungle exploding into an orange fireball of burning napalm but later shows the soldiers celebrating victory around an intimate campfire. These are the contrasts and contradictions of orange.

Yellow

Yellow reminds us of the innocence of childhood: daisies, yellow crayons, and rain slickers. It is the smiling face of the sun. But there is another side to yellow. It is the king's crown in *Camelot* (1967) and the gold in the briefcase with the 666 combo in *Pulp Fiction* (1994). It also signifies gold, wealth, and power. This duality is evident in the films of

Martin Scorsese such as *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), *The Aviator* (2004), *Casino* (1995), and most dramatically in the eponymous yellow taxi in *Taxi Driver* (1976). In these and other films, yellow can also signal obsession, fear, disease, and betrayal.

Green

Green can symbolize a range of themes from fertility and growth to corruption and decay. In *The Last Emperor* (1987), the director uses green to signify the acquisition of knowledge. French director Jean-Pierre Jeunet has created a distinctive visual mise-en-scène and lighting scheme in many of his films that features green as his key color, followed by red as a secondary, blue as a tertiary, and yellow as a quaternary color. This color scheme is starkly apparent in his films *A Very Long Engagement* (2004), *Amélie* (2001), *Delicatessen* (1991), and *The City of Lost Children* (1995). In all these films, green dominates the sets, décor, costumes, props, and lighting. Even the makeup on the actors is green!

Blue

When we think of blue, it suggests the peace of a vast, calm ocean and the freedom of a deep blue sky. It is the color of the United Nations and the helmets of international peacekeepers. At the same time, we associate blue with depression and sadness. It is cold and cerebral. Blue is the color of our thoughts; red is the color of our feelings. Identity is blue. The films of Ridley Scott such as *Blade Runner* (1982), *Gladiator* (2000), and *Black Hawk Down* (2001) share a common theme of identity, which is keyed to blue throughout the mise-en-scène.

Violet

Violet is the color of the spirit world. Tyrian purple was once a color reserved for royalty (think purple robes trimmed in the fur of wild animals) because in Roman times, it could only be derived at great expense through extraction from the glands of thousands of tiny shellfish. *Black Panther* (2018) uses a violet key color to evoke this association. In ancient Greek religion, creative inspiration was thought to be transmitted from the spirit world to

the human realm via the Muses. In modern times, we have come to associate colors in the violet realm with creativity, along with these spiritual associations. At the extreme, creative brilliance and madness are thought to fall along the same continuum. Van Gogh, Munch, Goya, and countless others embody this connection. *A Beautiful Mind* (2001) evokes this association through artful use of the color purple in its mise-en-scène.

Color Wheel

Our eyes are capable of perceiving millions of colors, but languages limit the ways we categorize these perceptions. While cultures in the postindustrial world may have a dozen categories of color (the color wheel), some preindustrial cultures have as few as three (black, white, and red). In a survey of preindustrial literature, blue is virtually absent. In our Western culture, black (the combination of all colors) is traditionally associated with death and mourning, but in many Asian cultures, white (the absence of color) takes on that role, evoking spirituality, and rebirth.

The traditional color wheel comprises color families: red, red-orange, orange, yellow-orange, yellow, yellow-green, green, blue-green, blue, blue-violet, violet, and red-violet. Colors on opposite sides of the wheel are called complementary, while adjacent colors are called analogous. Cool colors (blue, green, violet) are more cerebral and relaxing, while warm colors (red, yellow, orange) are more visceral and stimulating.

In *The Last Emperor* (1987), cinematographer Vittorio Storaro takes an unconventional approach to color coding with his key color moving around the color wheel in concert with the arc of the plot, starting with red as the young emperor takes the throne and shifting to orange, yellow, green, blue, and indigo to reflect the character's growth and development.

We've come a long way from the early days when filmmakers had to painstakingly brush color onto each individual frame of a film. In today's digital postproduction environment, the editor has virtually unlimited creative freedom to change or enhance color.

In whatever way it is applied, color is a powerful ingredient in the cinematic mix. It can convey emotion, theme, and tone while directly impacting the audience's response to a scene or character. Depending on the director's aesthetic goals, color can be boosted, desaturated, or changed with a few keystrokes on an editing console. This expressive potential has become a vital part of cinematic storytelling and it makes the viewing experience more expressive for the filmmaker and more compelling for the viewer.

8 | Motion

Illusion • Blocking • Camera

"Photography is truth . . . and cinema is truth 24 times a second."

—Jean-Luc Godard

Movies don't move. They are a slide show of still images, projected at twenty-four frames per second separated by darkness. It is the *illusion* of movement that gives cinema its unique power. Thanks to this magic, cinema stands alone among art forms. This illusion imbues cinema with a temporal and spatial fluidity capable of lifting and carrying the audience's attention with the irresistible force of an ocean tide.

The opening sequence of the film *Vertigo* (1958) begins with an abstract, swirling design that induces a physical sensation of dizziness or vertigo and transitions to shots of a rooftop chase that ends when the hero's fear of heights causes him to slip and dangle from a rooftop ledge. This opening sets up the film's themes of obsession, fear, and loss that will drive the plot, but it also showcases the director's signature visual style, using camera angles and movements to create a sense of disorientation and unease in the viewer. As the audience, we identify with the camera and experience its movement as our own—especially when it is vertiginous or disorienting.

Whether it is the freedom and exhilaration of riding on the back of a speeding motorcycle or the fear and panic of passengers on a 747 in freefall, we experience the camera's movement as our own. Aware of our physical identification with the camera, film directors often use the camera's movement to elicit a physical reaction in the audience. For example,

in the opening sequence of *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), the director presents a harrowing and intense portrayal of the Normandy invasion during World War II. Spielberg employs a handheld camera style to create a sense of immediacy and urgency. The camera shakes and jolts with the action as it follows American soldiers struggling to make their way up the beach, dodging bullets and explosions. The scene establishes the brutal and deadly nature of the conflict and sets the tone for the rest of the film.

The camera work in the films of Gaspar Noé such as *Irréversible* (2003) is known for vertiginous, disorienting movements that create a sense of unease and confusion (not to mention nausea) in the viewer. The opening shot of that film begins with the camera upside down, rotating rapidly accompanied by flashing strobe lights. Frenetic camera movements and sudden changes in direction continue throughout in long, unbroken takes that follow the characters as they move through the chaotic and violent world of the film.

Power of Movement

Film directors are keenly aware of the power of movement and apply it throughout their work using blocking (positioning and movement of actors within the frame), movement of the lens (panning, tilting, zooming), and movement of the camera (tracking, dollying, and use of jibs, cranes, and drones). Each of these movements causes a change in perspective that shifts the audience's point of view (POV) in a way that has the power to increase engagement and make viewing the film a more immersive experience.

We enter the world of a motion picture through the lens of the camera. It is the eye through which we view the events of the story. Our experiences, impressions, and perspectives are determined by the position and movement of this tube of glass and metal. It is the portal through which we enter the movie's world, and it is our avatar in that world. Our avatar can sit quietly against the wall, watching the events taking place around them. They can float above the action or move fluidly between locations. This approach to cinematic storytelling is like third-person narration in a novel. It is cool, objective, and often omniscient. On the other hand, our avatar can get up and interact with the characters. They might linger close enough to smell an ingénue's perfume or stare into the bloodshot eyes of a hardened killer. This approach is something like second-person narration in a novel that puts the reader into the events of the story as a subjective participant.

In a more extreme form of subjectivity, the lens can behave like a first-person narrator. In this case, our view of the story through the camera lens may be identical to the view of a character in that story. This is difficult to accomplish for logistical reasons (e.g., we never see the character unless they pass a mirror; if they blink or close their eyes the screen goes

dark; a punch or a kiss fills the frame), but it has been done. In *Lady in the Lake* (1947), the director sought to emulate the first-person prose style of hardboiled detective novelist Raymond Chandler. More recently, provocative Argentinian filmmaker Gaspar Noé has incorporated extended first-person POV in films such as *Enter the Void* (2009). In an extreme example, the Russian film *Hardcore Henry* (2016) employed GoPro cameras mounted on a specially made mask to render the entire narrative from the POV of the central character.

In less dramatic ways, the movement of the camera can serve to enhance the experience of the audience by adding naturalistic accents or subtle movement to an otherwise static scene. It can trigger an emotional or physical response in the audience by mimicking human or environmental movement. For example, in the final scene of *Irréversible* (2002), the camera follows the motion of a lawn sprinkler that sends us into a spin that feels like riding a tilt-a-whirl at the fair. These disorienting and chaotic camera rolls and arcs reinforce the emotionally and psychologically disturbing themes of the film.

Strategically executed camera moves are also used to subtly convey important narrative information at a subliminal level without drawing unwanted attention. These movements can foreshadow future events, create suspense, or establish familiar image configurations that will be repeated as a motif throughout the film. This is elegantly illustrated in the opening sequence of *10 Cloverfield Lane* (2016). As a young woman hurriedly packs her possessions to flee a failed engagement, the camera tracks past a liquor bottle on the counter. When the tracking shot passes the same counter a moment later, the bottle is gone. This tiny detail is quickly forgotten at the moment but takes on a pivotal significance later in the film.

Static

Now that we have established the significance and power of camera movement in film storytelling, let's look at the specific vocabulary of camera movements in a director's toolbox. The simplest and most common camera movement is no movement at all. When the camera is locked down on a stationary tripod and the operator simply turns it on and begins to film without changing position, it is known as a static shot. Depending on what is happening in front of the camera, the static shot is capable of great dramatic power. In *Twelve Years a Slave* (2012), the director uses a static shot to show us a character bound with a noose around his neck and his toes struggling for purchase on the muddy ground. Just as the character is trapped in the noose, the audience is trapped in the static shot and forced to witness the inhuman cruelty of the scene. The static shot is ideal when the director wishes to allow the actors room for improvisation. For example, in Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull* (1980), actors Robert De Niro and Joe Pesci freely improvise several scenes. In each case,

the camera is locked in a static position to capture their interaction, which will later be edited into the final film.

Pan

When the camera rotates from one side to the other on its mount, it is called a pan. The position of the camera in space remains the same, but the direction of the lens pivots on a horizontal axis. This movement is especially useful in establishing a location because it is capable of smoothly and efficiently revealing a large geographic area by simply panning the frame from one side of the scene to the other. This mimics a motion with which we are all familiar and accustomed to performing in our everyday lives when we turn our heads left or right.

Wes Anderson makes frequent use of the pan in films such as *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001) and *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014) to reveal additional information in a scene, often to slyly comic effect. When the pan is executed so rapidly that the image blurs, it is known as a "whip" or "swish" pan and is sometimes used as a transitional device between shots in different times or locations (e.g., in films of the James Bond franchise) or to quickly establish the connection between two characters. The latter technique is elegantly exemplified by director Damien Chazelle in *LaLa Land* (2016) and *Whiplash* (2013).

Tilt

A similar camera move on a vertical axis (as if tilting our head up or down) is called a tilt and is often used in establishing shots to indicate the action taking place on the upper stories of an apartment block or office building. Tilts are particularly useful in establishing scope or scale, as when the paleontologists in *Jurassic Park* (1993) get their first glimpse of the towering brachiosaurus or the programmer in *Inception* (2010) witnesses the streetscape of Paris curl back on itself and fill the sky above her. The pedestal shot is a variation of the tilt in which the entire camera position moves up or down rather than pivoting from a stationary position.

Naturalistic

Any time the camera moves in a way that mimics our natural perceptual experience we characterize the move as "naturalistic." Since they mimic our everyday perception, pans, and tilts are naturalistic camera techniques. We barely notice their use and accept them

as organic to the perceptual world of the story. Our visual perception of the world generally begins when we get out of bed in the morning. We stand or sit or walk or roll for the remainder of our waking hours. When we stand, our eyes are approximately four to five feet off the ground. When we sit in a chair, they are perhaps a foot or two lower. We walk or roll at about four miles per hour. When the camera is mounted at our typical standing or sitting height and moves at our standard walking or rolling pace, its position, and movement are naturalistic.

Naturalism was embraced by the Italian Neorealists during the years following World War II and became a dominant influence in "New Wave" movements around the world. Naturalistic camera techniques can give a fictional, narrative film a sense of immediacy and realism akin to a documentary. Examples of naturalistic filmmaking include *The Florida Project* (2017), *Moonlight* (2016), and *CODA* (2021). Taken to the extreme, naturalistic camera movement includes handheld footage in which the operator literally holds the camera without using any external support. This produces a shaky and unstable image capable of conveying jeopardy, fear, or loss of control. Since the audience identifies with the camera lens, this type of movement is disorienting and can produce vertigo and even nausea in the viewer. For this reason, it is generally used sparingly and alternated with stable and stationary shots. Powerful examples of this technique include the opening sequence of *Strange Days* (1995) and *Enter the Void* (2009) as well as action sequences in the Jason Bourne and James Bond franchises.

The invention of the Steadicam in 1975 allowed for handheld footage without camera shake. It consists of a harness worn by the camera operator that uses a system of springs and gimbals to keep the camera steady even when the operator is moving. The result is "handheld" footage that conveys a subjective and intimate view of the characters and actions in the scene without making the audience feel seasick.

Tracking

The most common camera movement is the tracking shot, so named because the camera is mounted on a tripod located on a wheeled "dolly" cart riding on a laid track similar to a railway. The tracking shot smoothly moves the entire camera rig from one location to another sideways (trucking), forward (dolly in or push in), or backward (dolly out or pull out) through the scene. Tracking shots tend to run longer on screen than other camera moves, often incorporating elaborate choreography that includes complex blocking of the actors in the scene. Master directors will sometimes show off their technical prowess by executing extended and elaborate tracking shots as in *Touch of Evil* (1958), *The Shining* (1980), *Goodfellas* (1990), *The Player* (1992), *Boogie Nights* (1997), *Snake Eyes* (1998),

and *Birdman* (2014). Powerful but less well-known examples of this type of camera virtuosity include *Soy Cuba* (1964) and *Russian Ark* (2002).

The dolly in (or push in) moves the camera toward a character or significant detail until it fills the screen. This camera move is especially good at moments of decision, as when Michael Corleone seals his destiny by murdering two men at close range in *The Godfather* (1972). A significant prop can also be featured as the object of a dolly in, for example, the key to the forbidden room in *Notorious* (1946) or the sled at the end of *Citizen Kane* (1941) that reveals the answer to the central question of the film: "What is the meaning of Kane's last words, 'Rosebud'?"

The counterpoint to a dolly in is a dolly out or pull out which generally begins with a close-up or tight shot of a character or object and pulls back to reveal the context. This technique can be used to "disengage" us from a character by physically pulling away from them, showing a character's isolation or abandonment in the larger environment, showing other characters in the scene, or revealing more about the setting in which the scene takes place. A "pull-back-to-reveal" shot using a dolly, jib, drone, crane, or helicopter can serve as a dramatic final punctuation at the end of a film, as exemplified in *Citizen Kane* (1941), *The Graduate* (1967), and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981).

Zoom

Not strictly a camera move, the zoom changes the focal length of the shot without changing the camera position. It allows the camera operator to push in or pull out from the subject by simply turning the zoom ring on a lens. This has been used effectively by motion picture directors such as Mike Nichols in *The Graduate* (1967), Arthur Penn in *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), and Stanley Kubrick in *The Shining* (1980). However, many directors are adamant in their rejection of zoom lenses which allow the lens to move in and out of space without changing the camera position.

One argument against zooms is that our eyes are not equipped with a zoom function and so the camera zoom feels "artificial," whereas a camera movement feels "organic" because it imitates the way we move through physical space. Another argument against the aesthetic of zoom lenses is that they produce an image of inferior quality due to the necessity of incorporating additional lens material in their design. Finally, it has been argued that zoom lenses have been (and continue to be) a staple in television and hence are associated with that medium.

There is a signature shot that has been used by several iconic directors that incorporates both a zoom lens and a dolly movement. Known as a "dolly zoom," it requires the dolly

crew to move the camera position forward or back while simultaneously zooming the lens in the opposite direction. This produces an image in which the subject remains consistent, but the background grows distorted. This technique was used to dramatic effect by Alfred Hitchcock in *Vertigo* (1958) to simulate the protagonist's experience of vertigo and later repeated in homage by Martin Scorsese in *Goodfellas* (1990).

Arcs, Rolls, and Aerials

Two unusual but visually striking camera movements are the arc and the roll. The arc moves the camera in a 180-degree or 360-degree arc around the subject, revealing the subject from multiple vantage points in a single shot. By orbiting in an arc around the subject, the director generates visual energy, renders the subject heroic or menacing, and creates a sense of exuberance or entrapment. All these applications are evident in *Wall Street* (1987). Early in the film, we see the young and ambitious Wall Street broker played by Charlie Sheen in an arc shot in which he appears as the calm eye at the center of a chaotic trading room that surrounds him. Later, we see his mentor-turned-nemesis Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas) in another arc shot in which he is cornered by victims of a hostile takeover he engineered.

The roll is an even more dramatic camera move, in which the camera is rotated upside down, producing a disorienting and unnatural image designed to unsettle the audience. A camera roll is used in the opening sequence of *Apocalypse Now* (1979) to give the audience a glimpse into the psychologically unhinged world of the protagonist. In *Great Expectations* (1998), the director uses a camera roll to reflect the visual perception of a young New York painter as he pursues his elusive love interest.

When a director wants to imbue their storytelling with a sense of power and grandeur, the camera is often mounted on a crane, boom, or jib. These devices come in a variety of shapes and sizes but typically resemble a cherry-picker or telephone lineman's truck. They allow the camera operator virtually unrestricted freedom of movement up, down, in, out, and side-to-side—all at the same time. The crane can raise the camera high above the set, then sweep down into the action in one smooth movement. It can produce moves equivalent to trucking, dolly in, dolly out, pedestal, pan, tilt, static shots, as well as combination moves. Crane shots are particularly useful for establishing shots that reveal the setting of the scene to follow.

The aerial shot (sometimes known as the "bird's eye") is taken from high above the scene. Originally filmed from a plane or helicopter, today, these are generally captured using the more economical option of a drone. Like a crane shot, they convey a sense of grandeur and add production value to the scene. They are a staple of epic dramas such as

Lawrence of Arabia (1962), *The English Patient* (1996), and *Atonement* (2007). Alfred Hitchcock used aerial footage throughout *The Birds* (Hitchcock, 1963) to evoke the viewpoint of the mysterious predator. *The Graduate* (1967) ends with the runaway lovers inside a yellow, public bus as the camera ascends over the bus and up into the sky until we see nothing but a tiny yellow speck moving slowly down a ribbon of highway. In an unforgettable sequence from Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976), the disturbed protagonist Travis Bickle ends his shooting rampage sprawled and bloody in a room full of corpses. The camera floats above the scene into an aerial view, then floats like a disembodied spirit over the gathering crowd and into the night.

Finally, the "random" movement of the camera is sometimes used to create a sense of realism, as if the events on screen were captured by accident. If used judiciously, random camera movement can create a documentary feel that turns up the intensity of the scene.

Approaches to Motion

Most directors develop a signature style that favors a particular approach to motion. Some, like iconic Japanese auteur Akira Kurosawa, favor locking the camera down in one position and blocking the movement of the actors within the frame like a kinetic painting or theatrical performance. This approach is artfully illustrated in *Ran* (1985), a poetic interpretation of Shakespeare's *King Lear* in which Lear is an aging warlord in Medieval Japan. Early in the film, the warlord sits down at an open-air gathering surrounded by family, foes, and allies. The scene is shot with few cuts and almost no movement of the camera, and yet it is filled with dramatic tension as the shifting loyalties of the characters are enacted for the audience as if on a proscenium stage.

Other directors favor a kinetic camera that is in constant motion, almost like a character in the story. Since the audience most closely identifies with the camera lens, this approach draws us into the action and generates a visceral sense of immediacy. Kathryn Bigelow, Academy Award-winning director of *Point Break* (1991), *Strange Days* (1995), *The Hurt Locker* (2008), and *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), is well known for stylistic choices that explore the film medium's kinetic potential. Employing mobile and handheld cameras, Bigelow creates unique and distinctive shots that give the audience a powerful sense of "being there" in each scene. The opening robbery scene of *Strange Days* (2008) serves as a vivid illustration of Bigelow's kinetic style. The entire scene is one extended handheld take from the POV of one of the robbers that ends with the robber's fall to his death. The audience experiences his final, adrenaline-fueled experiences in first-person through the eye of the camera.

Stillness—the absence of movement—can also be used for powerful effect in a film. Like silence, the creative use of stillness can create tension or anticipation in the audience. It can call attention to subtle detail or draw us into the psychological dimension of a character through a minute examination of their facial expression or body language. This is artfully demonstrated in *The Consequences of Love* (2004), a crime drama by Italian auteur Paolo Sorrentino starring Toni Servillo as a mafia bag man trapped in a Swiss banking town. The director employs long, static shots of the protagonist sitting and smoking in which the only movement in the frame is smoke twisting through the sunlight and subtle shifts in Servillo's expressive face. The cumulative effect of these shots is an excruciating tension that explodes later in the film with devastating impact.

9 | Time

Ellipsis ◦ Editing ◦ Chronotope

"Time is the substance I am made of."

—Jorge Luis Borges

The visionary novelist H. G. Wells described a trip to the moon in 1901, long before Apollo One landed in the Sea of Tranquility; he conjured an invisible man that inspired generations of filmmakers; and he envisioned time travel before *Back to the Future* (1985) entered our popular culture. In his novel, *The Time Machine*, Wells' protagonist creates a vehicle that allows him to enter the matrix of time and move fluidly along the past–present–future continuum at whatever speed suits his fancy. The hero can race or saunter forward or back in time and stop at any moment along the way. This is the way Wells describes his protagonist's experience:

> I drew a breath, set my teeth, gripped the starting lever with both hands, and went off with a thud . . . The night came like the turning out of a lamp, and in another moment came tomorrow . . . night came back, then day again, night again, day again, faster and faster still . . . night followed day like the flapping of a black wing . . . I saw the sun hopping swiftly across the sky, leaping at every minute, and every minute marking a day.

This fabulous conceit is no longer the stuff of science fiction. Today, each of us has access to this ecstatic experience for the price of a movie ticket. When we take our seats in a cinema and the lights go down, we take our place in a time machine with a director and editor at the controls. They can transport us back to the dawn of human civilization and then hit a single key and drop us into an imaginary future—all in one 24th of a second. That is exactly what Stanley Kubrick accomplishes in the opening sequence of his masterpiece *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). We see a simian tribe on the African savanna at the dawn of humankind as they discover and use tools for the first time. One of the apes celebrates this achievement by throwing a bone in the air in jubilation. Before our eyes, in the fraction of a second between motion picture frames, that bone morphs into an orbital space station floating above planet Earth thousands of years later. The director bridges millennia in the blink of an eye using a simple graphical match cut between two oblong objects. This is the power of cinema.

Chronotope

Chronotope is a philosophical term that describes configurations of time and space. It was originally used in literary analysis to describe the way different novelists handled the time–space continuum. Cinema offers an even richer field of study in which to explore this concept. The film editor has an arsenal of conventions and techniques that allow them to manipulate time and space in a staggering variety of ways: parallel editing, continuity editing, discontinuity editing, compression, expansion, flashback, and flash-forward are just some of the most common of these editorial manipulations.

Actualities

The first films were unedited. The camera operator simply set up a shot and filmed continuously until the film ran out. The entire movie was one extended scene without a cut. Examples include the *actualities* of the Lumière Brothers and Thomas Edison's Nickelodeon shows. These early filmmakers assumed that audiences would be confused by any sudden shift in space or time. The result was much like watching a theatrical performance from a front-row seat: the position and perspective of the camera (and, by extension, the audience) was stationary and fixed. The performance was an uninterrupted sequence of events in chronological order. The limitations of this approach were soon manifest.

Trip to the Moon

Fortunately for cinematic art, the magician George Méliès was inspired by the Lumières' *actualities* and obtained a motion picture camera of his own. He set up a film studio on the outskirts of Paris and began making movies that pushed the possibilities of cinema in ways the Lumière Brothers had failed to imagine. Méliès cut together images shot at different times to construct a story, trusting that the audience would be able to fill in the gaps. His trust was well-placed: audiences were thrilled and astounded by the magical effects in Méliès' films such as *A Trip to the Moon* (1902).

When Thomas Edison reached the limit of his creative vision for the nascent cinematic art form, he hired a young projectionist named Edwin S. Porter to find new ways of putting it to use. He chose well. Years of working behind the projector had given Porter unprecedented insight into the kind of stories, images, and effects that had the greatest dramatic impact on audiences. His films pioneered parallel editing: cutting between events taking place in different locations at the same time. Like the films of George Méliès, they also created a summary relationship between chronological time and cinematic time, effectively compressing time so that the events depicted during a short film could cover days, weeks, months, or years.

Blockbuster

Building on the foundation of Porter's cinematic innovations, D. W. Griffith expanded the visual vocabulary of cinema. His pioneering grammar of visual techniques is still in use today. Prominent among Griffith's contributions are the close-up, eye-line matches, match-on-action, and other conventions of continuity editing which we take for granted. Griffith's contemporaries dismissed many of these iconic contributions on the grounds that they would confuse audiences or disrupt the flow of the story. They were mistaken. Audiences were able to process and understand this new visual language and reveled in it. Watching one of Griffith's first films must have felt like reading a novel for the first time.

Griffith's films were the first blockbusters. They utilized all his formal innovations and employed casts of thousands and budgets that were unheard of at the time. *Intolerance* (1916) had scenes spanning centuries and continents, compressed into a single narrative.

Once Griffith established that a film could successfully create a summary relationship in time, it became a standard filmmaking convention. We don't need to see the boring parts of a character's life—only events that serve to advance the plot or deepen our understanding

of character. We assume that the characters in a movie eat and sleep and use the toilet, but we don't need to see these acts to know they exist. Our imagination fills in the blanks.

Summary and Stretch

While most cinematic storytelling relies on compressing time—stringing together events that span days or years during two hours of screen time—there are storytelling situations in which expanding time is a more useful approach. This is especially true in highly dramatic or action-packed stories. Take, for example, a scene in which the hero jumps their motorcycle over the barbed wire barrier of a military checkpoint under machine gun fire. The director might elect to show the action in slow motion from multiple perspectives, punctuated by close-ups. What would take two seconds in real time might occupy two minutes of cinematic time. This is known as a "stretch relationship" and is effectively the opposite of the more common summary relationship.

These conventions of visual film grammar contribute to the audience's perception of continuity in film storytelling. This approach was the mainstay of cinematic expression for most of the first century of film history. In continuity editing, the events depicted on screen proceed in chronological order. There is a logical progression to the story, and everything we see serves to carry us along in a fashion that supports our willing suspension of disbelief.

Discontinuity

Starting with the Soviet Montage movement of the 1920s and Surrealists like Louis Buñuel, a small but pioneering group of filmmakers began experimenting with alternative narrative approaches that strain our willing suspension of disbelief and force us to be conscious of cinematic artifice. Rather than conceal the tools and techniques of cinematic storytelling, these films and directors force us to acknowledge cinema's visual tropes as an integral part of the filmgoing experience. In discontinuity editing, events often occur out of chronological sequence. The filmmaker may elect to skip back in time via a flashback or jump forward into the future using a flash-forward. Images may be juxtaposed based on poetic rather than narrative associations.

In the realistic tradition of film storytelling that began with the Lumière Brothers, continuity and logic are paramount. In formalistic or antirealistic films pioneered by filmmakers such as George Méliès, visual artistry, and emotional or psychological associations

dominate. Recent examples of discontinuity editing include the work of American director David Lynch, Canadian director David Cronenberg, and French Argentine director Gaspar Nöe. These directors push the envelope of film convention to create works of art that transcend the boundaries of time and space resulting in films such as *Existenz* (1999), *Mulholland Drive* (2001), and *Irreversible* (2002) that challenge us to view the world in new ways.

Screen, Plot, and Story

Every film is defined by three measures of time: screen time, plot time, and story time. The first, screen time, is straightforward: how long does the film occupy the movie screen? Most contemporary films share a screen time of approximately two hours. This is a practical convention based on the human attention span.

While a film's screen time is fixed at approximately two hours, its story time is unlimited. Everything we know about the characters and the world of the story becomes part of story time. If the character has a dream that they were a Pharaoh in ancient Egypt, the story time expands by thousands of years. If they find a dinosaur bone in the backyard, story time might grow to 100,000 years. Everything we know or understand to be part of the story becomes part of story time—regardless of whether it is explicitly presented on screen. Plot time comprises the events we see depicted in the film. Typically, plot time is shorter than story time.

Hard Rock Story

Consider, for example, a movie about a twenty-one-year-old couple who meet by chance at the Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas on New Year's Eve 2023. They have strong sexual chemistry and end up in bed together in room 838. Reality comes crashing down the following morning. She is engaged to be married to her high school sweetheart, and he is about to leave for a study abroad year in Paris. However, they make a romantic pact to meet back at the Hard Rock Las Vegas in room 838 every year on December 31.

This scenario can be presented in an infinite number of different ways. We could begin with the couple's first meeting. We could open with the man reacting to a knock at the door to room 838 in the year 2024. We could tell the history of their romance through flashbacks or reveal the outcome through a flash-forward. The couple could tell each other about all

the events that have taken place during the previous year. The entire plot could take place during a single night. The point is screen time remains two hours. Plot time (the events we see) may be a single night. However, story time expands to encompass everything we learn about the lives of our characters (including that dream of being an Egyptian Pharaoh in the year 3000 BCE). In that case, screen time equals two hours; plot time equals twelve hours; but story time becomes 5000 years.

Alternative Approaches

Christopher Nolan

Of all the directors currently working in Hollywood, few display a more complex and nuanced expression of cinematic time than the British-American director Christopher Nolan. In his films, Nolan explores a range of metaphysical, existential, and epistemological themes as they relate to the nature of time, memory, and identity. For example, *Memento* (2000) begins with a murder and then proceeds in reverse chronological order to reveal the complex web of antecedents leading up to the act. The protagonist suffers from short-term memory loss so severe that he is unable to remember events from one moment to the next. The narrative flows steadily backward but skips freely through time using flashbacks and flash-forwards. *Inception* (2010) explores the nature of time in dreams which possess a temporal plasticity that is unknown in waking life. *Interstellar* (2014) ventures into the realm of physics and relativity. In one memorable scene, the protagonist is stranded for several hours on a planet where time passes much more quickly, and he returns to find that decades have gone by on his spaceship. *Tenet* (2020) takes up the concept that time moves in all directions at once and that events from the past and future are simultaneous with the present. The way that Nolan structures his films draws our attention to the interplay between time and narrative and expands the boundaries of cinematic possibility.

David Lynch

Director David Lynch revels in disrupting narrative expectations, jumping freely through different dimensions of time. In *Mulholland Drive* (2001), he presents vastly different versions of the same events intercut with the dreams and fantasies of his characters. In *Blue Velvet* (1986) and *Wild at Heart* (1990), he arranges situations and characters for maximum emotional and psychological impact without being overly concerned with the niceties of

temporal and narrative logic. *Lost Highway* (1997) effectively jettisons logic and causality and instead unfurls like a demented fever dream.

Cronenberg and Nöe

David Cronenberg, director of *Naked Lunch* (1991), *Crash* (1996), and *Existenz* (1999), uses our sensitivities around infection, contagion, and bodily transformation to craft deeply disturbing narratives that follow the temporal and spatial logic of dreams. Gaspar Nöe's *Irreversible* (2002), *Enter the Void* (2009), and *Love* (2015) go even further, using stroboscopic effects in time and vertiginous camera movements in space to induce temporal and spatial disorientation in the viewer akin to a drug-induced hallucination.

Time Machine

Some filmmakers present the audience with a realistic portrayal of narrative events that mimic our quotidian experience of normal life. Other directors push the formal boundaries of cinema, seeking to impact filmgoers at a deeper psychological and emotional level. Regardless of which approach—realistic or antirealistic—a filmmaker takes in crafting their cinematic narrative, the result is always going to place the viewer in a time machine with the director at the controls. They may choose to lead us through a sequence of events in real time as Hitchcock does in *Rope* (1948) and DePalma does in *Snake Eyes* (1998). They may give us the story of an entire life in flashbacks from multiple points of view as Orson Welles does in *Citizen Kane* (1941). Finally, they may choose to fragment time and reshuffle events for maximum dramatic impact as Tarantino does in *Pulp Fiction* (1994).

Using tools and techniques pioneered by early filmmakers such as George Méliès, Edwin S. Porter, and D.W. Griffith, the modern filmmaker can customize the cinematic time machine in a dazzling variety of ways. As each of these innovations is incorporated into the visual vocabulary of film, the film artist is challenged to push back against convention and come up with new ways to make cinema their own.

10 | SPACE

Mise-en-Scène • Frame • Proxemics

"Space is the breath of art."

—Frank Lloyd Wright

Film scholar Éric Rohmer once observed that cinematic space exists on three different planes: the "architectural" space of the film, the space within the individual shot, and the virtual space evoked within the imagination of the audience. This observation serves as a useful jumping-off point for our discussion of the spatial dimension in movies.

A film's "architectural space" includes the way in which the physical space is utilized to convey meaning and create a sense of place. It may include actual locations, constructed sets, and/or special effects created on a computer. These are coupled with visual techniques such as framing, camera angles, lenses, shot types, and lighting to generate a feeling of realism—for example in *Before Sunrise* (1995)—or to generate disorientation and confusion as in *Un Chien Andalou* (1929).

Within an individual shot, composition, lighting, and camera movement are used to convey space, depth, location, mood, and atmosphere. Wide shots, close-ups, and tracking shots can manipulate the viewer's perception of space and direct their attention. For example, a wide shot of a city can convey scale and grandeur as in *Blade Runner* (1982), while close-ups can invoke a sense of intimacy as in *Out of Sight* (1998). The use of different camera angles can also create perspective and can be used to convey power and control or alienation and vulnerability. This is illustrated in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) as the

protagonist, trapped in a wheelchair, views events outside his window from above until the killer enters his room and exposes his helplessness.

Design and Composition

A film's mise-en-scène can be broken down into two parts. The design of the film includes every element in a shot: the sets, costumes, decor, props, and so on. The second component of mise-en-scène is composition—the way these design elements are arranged in space. Are things close together or far apart? Is the frame filled with visual elements or is there an abundance of negative space? Is the camera close to the action or recording from a distance?

The composition can convey emotion, create suspense, or establish the power dynamics between characters. For example, a close-up shot of a character's face can communicate intense emotion, while a wide shot can imply isolation.

Camera movement can also be used to convey meaning. A tracking shot can express movement and energy, while a static shot may signal stillness and contemplation. Bright lighting might telegraph optimism, while darkness can communicate despair. The composition within shots is a key part of the visual language the director uses to communicate the themes and meanings of a film.

Frame

Framing refers to the composition of a shot and how the elements within the shot are arranged on the screen. The frame is the physical boundary of the shot, and the elements within the frame can be arranged in a variety of ways to convey meaning and emotion. Think of it like the frame a painter puts around a painting. It defines the space within which the artwork exists. Everything within the frame is part of the painting while everything outside of the frame is excluded. The motion picture frame functions in much the same way.

There are millions of objects and events occurring within our field of vision at any given moment. We selectively edit that data to isolate and elevate those objects and events that are significant to our life in that sliver of time. For example, a pickup truck parked at the curb might not register in our consciousness at all, whereas the same truck barreling

across our lane of traffic on a busy street will enter our visual radar with a red flag. Filmmakers know that the camera is our proxy in their world, and they constantly arrange objects and events in front of the camera to trigger these natural responses.

Dominant and Subsidiary Contrasts

The first place our eye goes within the film frame is called the "dominant." It is the primary focal point of the shot. The next spots we naturally go to are known as "subsidiary contrasts." For example, the human face is almost always the most compelling part of any composition and will usually be the dominant focal point in the frame. Hands often come next as subsidiary contrasts. However, if a weapon is introduced, it might take the position of the dominant and bump facial reaction to a subsidiary contrast.

Production Designer

The production designer is the director's chief collaborator when it comes to the film's mise-en-scène. Along with the cinematographer, the production designer is a key member of the director's creative inner circle responsible for bringing a film to life. They oversee all the design and visual aspects of the production, including sets, décor, costumes, hair, makeup, props—virtually everything you see on screen. Working closely with the director and cinematographer, they are responsible for the visual style and aesthetic of the film. It is up to the production designer to create a coherent, cohesive, and compelling world to support the story and its characters.

Look Book

The visual concept behind a motion picture evolves out of conversations between the director, cinematographer, and production designer. It may begin with a director's vague notion to create a "look" that draws from the mid-century modern design movement, architectural photographs of Palm Springs in the 1950s, costumes inspired by the "Rat Pack" in Vegas circa 1957, Life Magazine covers of that era, and period advertising. After doing historical and cultural research, the production designer presents their ideas to the director in the

form of a "lookbook" that includes photographs, clippings, fabric samples, and artwork that reflect the desired aesthetic for the film.

As the design concept is refined and finalized, the production designer assembles a team of artisans to produce the physical sets and set dressing, costumes, furnishings, and props. They scout locations and source all the material needed on set. Remember: nothing you see in a movie existed on set before the production. Every object had to be created or brought to the set, from the Chevy Bel Air in the driveway to the salt-and-pepper shakers on the kitchen table.

Costumes must be created for every character in the film, including hundreds of extras in the background of crowd scenes. Actors rarely go on camera wearing the clothes they arrived in. The production designer works closely with the costume department to fabricate or source every item of clothing you see on the screen. Department heads in charge of hair, makeup, prosthetics, and special effects all report to the production designer as do the carpenters, painters, and greenspeople.

Rule of Thirds

The use of rule of thirds, which divides the frame into thirds horizontally and vertically, is a common technique employed when framing a shot. This compositional guideline has been used in the visual arts for centuries. Dividing an image with equally spaced lines allows the artist to locate visual elements in the most dynamic and aesthetically pleasing position within a grid. This creates a feeling of balance and guides the viewer's eye to the most important element.

The use of close-ups, medium shots, and long shots can also be used to telegraph different emotions and perspectives. Depth of field controls what is in focus, and this also guides our attention to elements within the frame that the director wants us to notice. Composition in a film can create meaning through the way elements within the frame are arranged and relate to each other. For example, the position, size, and movement of visual elements can reinforce emotions, thoughts, and themes.

In *Heat* (1995), director Michael Mann deliberately strips the composition back to stark minimalism in scenes at the protagonist Neil's beach house to convey his emotionally barren life. After Neil establishes a romantic connection with his love interest Eady, the compositional pallet expands to include art, plants, and sparkling city lights.

The use of symmetry or asymmetry in a shot can be used to reflect stability or tension. A close-up of a person's face may communicate emotions and thoughts that are very different from those conveyed by a wide shot of the same person. The positioning of characters within the frame can also reveal their relationship and the power dynamics between them.

Our natural world is intrinsically asymmetrical and perfect symmetry strikes us as artificial and disturbing. In *The Shining* (1980), director Stanley Kubrick uses supersymmetrical compositions throughout the film to create a feeling of unease and to emphasize the overwhelming sense of isolation experienced by the characters.

Masters of Mise-en-Scène

Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* (1990) uses close-ups and medium shots to create a sense of intimacy and to convey the thoughts and emotions of his characters. In *Citizen Kane* (1941), Orson Welles uses deep focus to show the relationship between different elements within the frame and to emphasize the vastness of Kane's empire. Director Christopher Nolan employs diagonal lines in *Inception* (2010) to emphasize the disorienting quality of the dream world. In Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), the director uses unconventional framing and camera angles to create an off-kilter reality that resonates with the nonlinear narrative structure of the film.

Color, Light, and Scale

Props included in the composition of a film may be used to symbolically reiterate the theme. For example, in *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994), the director employs birds as a symbol of freedom and to telegraph the theme of redemption. In contrast, Alfred Hitchcock uses the same visual element to invoke fear and suspense in *Psycho* (1960) and *The Birds* (1963).

A director may also use color in the mise-en-scène to generate a mood or convey a theme. For example, in *The Great Gatsby* (2013), the director uses bright, vibrant colors to represent the excesses of the 1920s as evidence of the hollowness of the American Dream—a leitmotif in the film. A green light across the water from Gatsby's mansion is a repeating visual element that comes to symbolize the elusive object of Gatsby's desire and all she represents.

Light can also be used in the mise-en-scène to convey the theme. For example, in *Casablanca* (1942), director Michael Curtiz uses intricate patterns of light and shadow in the film's mise-en-scène to reflect the complex and shifting morals of expatriates in North Africa at the beginning of World War II. In *Taxi Driver* (1976), Scorsese uses dark, broken lighting to convey the gritty, urban atmosphere of New York City and the protagonist's loneliness and alienation. In contrast, *The Matrix* (1999) employs brilliant white lighting to symbolize the oppressive and artificial world created by the machines.

A film director can even use camera movement to convey theme. For example, in *The Social Network* (2010), the director employs tracking shots to emphasize the fast-paced, cutthroat aspect of the tech industry, which reinforces the film's theme of ruthless ambition.

Proxemics is a powerful tool in the hands of a filmmaker. Since we experience movies through the eye of the camera, we experience cinematic space as if we inhabit it. Tight spaces can evoke claustrophobia. Vast, open spaces can produce feelings of alienation. Intimate space can evoke arousal or anxiety—demanding whether our screen cohabitant is a glamorous movie star or a drooling space alien.

Shot Types

Shot type is key to proxemics in film. From widest to tightest, the principle shot types are extreme long shot (ELS), long shot (LS), medium shot (MS), close-up (CU), and extreme close-up (ECU). There are variations within each of these shot types, and they are used for different purposes depending on context.

Extreme Long Shot

In general, the extreme long shot is used to show characters in the environment. The character appears small in the frame, and the shot conveys their relationship to their surroundings. This can signify isolation, insignificance, or freedom.

In *The Revenant* (2015), the protagonist's desperate position is constantly reinforced by extreme long shots of his tiny figure against the backdrop of seemingly endless mountains and forests. In this shot type, identifying details such as facial features and clothing are obscured by their size within the frame. Instead, we see the human figure dwarfed by the massive scale of the natural world. This shot type is a frequent device in Westerns used to convey the epic setting of the untamed West. The establishing shot at the beginning of a new scene is often captured with an extreme long shot because it effectively introduces the setting for the action that follows.

Long Shot

The long shot (LS) shows us characters in relation to each other and their environment. It can easily show the dynamics between characters revealed through their body language and

movements. This shot type is especially useful if the director wishes to convey a feeling of intimacy or tension between characters.

Medium Shot

A medium shot (MS) captures a character from approximately the waist up to the top of the head. Facial expressions are visible and can be used to reveal a character's emotions and reactions. While it is possible to include more than one character in a medium shot, it is often used to focus the attention of the audience on a particular character.

Close-Up

The close-up (CU) is the most powerful device in a director's toolkit. It isolates a single character from the chest to the crown of the head and focuses the audience's full attention on the subtle emotions that play across the character's face. The actor can reveal thoughts and feelings using their eyes without uttering a word.

It is no accident that the close-up dominates the visual vocabulary of cinema. It resonates with a primal memory shared by every human on the planet: the helplessness and vulnerability of infancy. During the first months of life, we all experience utter dependence on another human for protection, nourishment, shelter, and warmth. That primal "other" is embedded in our memory as an image of the human face. The close-up of an actor on a forty-foot movie screen closely resembles in both scale and dimensions what we once associated in infancy with our very survival. That association plays on our psyche at the deepest level of memory and emotion.

Extreme Close-Up

The extreme close-up (ECU) can bring fine detail to the attention of the audience. This is elegantly illustrated in the inventive cinematography of *Notorious* (1946) in which the director uses extreme close-ups to reveal a stolen key in the hand of Alicia (Ingrid Bergman), which will open a secret room used by a ring of Nazi conspirators. The ECU is later used to draw our attention to a cup of poison she is coerced into drinking.

Space and Meaning

There are many examples of film directors using cinematic space to convey meaning in their movies. In Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980), the Overlook Hotel's architecture and design is used to create feelings of unease and claustrophobia. Kubrick employs wide and tracking shots to highlight the hotel's labyrinthine design which parallels the main character's abnormal psychology and feelings of entrapment and isolation.

In Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010), the director uses a variety of camera techniques to enhance the film's mind-bending, dreamlike central premise. Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) elegantly illustrates the power of different camera angles and movements to convey his protagonist's sexual obsession. In *The Tree of Life* (2011), director Terrence Malick crafts a nonlinear narrative, linking images of nature, family, and space with existential themes of creation, life, and death.

Open Framing

Open framing describes a type of shot composition in which the frame of the shot is not filled with the subject matter. This can be achieved using a wide-angle lens, positioning the camera at a distance from the subject, or leaving a significant amount of negative space around the subject. The spaciousness of this approach can be used to convey scale, distance, or the vastness of the environment. It can also be used to invoke a sense of wonder and awe or to establish the setting of a scene. Open framing may convey freedom or distance between characters and the observing audience.

When the subject is a small element in the frame, it can emphasize their insignificance or vulnerability and can telegraph loneliness, isolation, or confinement. Open framing is often used in conjunction with other visual elements such as lighting, color, and movement to create atmosphere, mood, and meaning. It's a technique that can be used to contrast the subject and the background, to create depth and movement, and to draw attention to specific elements in the frame.

The Westerns of John Ford such as *The Searchers* (1956) vividly illustrate all of these uses of open framing. David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) is another prime example. In that film, the director uses open framing to convey the vast and barren desert landscape, which serves as both a challenge and a source of freedom for the main character. In Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love* (2000), the director uses framing to contrast the longing and isolation felt by the main characters with the confinement caused by their inability to connect.

Closed Framing

Closed framing describes a type of shot composition in which the frame of the shot is filled with subject matter. This can be achieved using a telephoto lens, positioning the camera close to the subject, or filling the frame with visual information. It can create a sense of intimacy, claustrophobia, or confinement in the audience. It can also be used to draw the viewer's attention to specific details; generate a feeling of urgency; or convey isolation, power, and control.

When a subject dominates the frame, it telegraphs both importance and power. As with open framing, closed framing is often used in conjunction with other visual elements to create meaning. In Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull* (1980), the director uses closed framing to convey the intensity and focus of the boxer's training, as well as claustrophobia inside the boxing ring. In *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), Stanley Kubrick uses close-ups of the main character's face to convey his twisted psychology and to generate discomfort in the audience. Alfred Hitchcock uses the same technique in *Psycho* (1960) with close-ups of objects such as knives and shower heads to create tension and draw the viewer's focus to details that build suspense.

Proxemics

Introduced by Edward T. Hall in his 1966 book *The Hidden Dimension*, proxemics can be divided into four main categories: intimate distance (touching to eighteen inches), personal distance (eighteen inches to four feet), social distance (four feet to twelve feet), and public distance (over twelve feet). These distances are considered comfortable zones of interaction depending on culture, context, and relationship. For example, intimate distance is used in close relationships such as between romantic partners or family members, while public distance is used in formal settings such as in a lecture or a public speech.

Proxemics is not limited to physical distance but also includes the use of visual cues such as body language, gaze, and facial expression. It is widely applied in film and theatre to create meaning and convey emotion. For example, a wide shot of two characters standing far apart can convey emotional distance or tension between them, while a close-up of the same characters sitting close together may telegraph intimacy and connection.

This technique can also be used to reveal a character's emotional state or to convey power dynamics. For example, a shot of a character standing alone in a large, empty space may communicate isolation or loneliness, while a shot of the same character standing in a crowded space might convey a feeling of being overwhelmed or lost.

When a character is placed near the edge of the frame, it often signals vulnerability or danger. In a confrontation scene, the spatial orientation of the characters to each other and to the camera is especially relevant in deciphering complex and shifting power dynamics. A classic example of this technique occurs early in Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) when Scotty's old Army buddy hires him to tail his young wife for money.

Mise-en-scène, proxemics, shot type, and framing are all powerful tools in the hands of a skilled director. They can be used to subtly convey meaning, relationship, tension, isolation, or connection between characters, their environment, and the audience. By carefully manipulating cinematic space, the director dramatically increases a story's impact on the viewer.

11 | Waves

Truth · Look · Dogma

"Art is either plagiarism or revolution."

—Paul Gauguin

As in painting, music, and literature, trends in the style and execution of motion pictures have been identified and labeled as film "movements" by critics due to their convergence in time and place. These include major developments like German Expressionism, Soviet Montage, Italian Neorealism, and The French New Wave.

In addition, there have been "New Wave" movements in Iran, Japan, Australia, France, Britain, Brazil, Portugal, Czechoslovakia, Hong Kong, Germany, Mexico, Romania, and Taiwan, as well as smaller "niche" movements such as L. A. Rebellion, No Wave Cinema, Parallel Cinema, Yugoslav Black Wave, Third Cinema, Chinese Fifth and Sixth Generation, and Scandinavian Revival, to name a few.

The limits of space in the current volume do not allow for an exhaustive survey of every international film movement or a deep dive into any one movement. However, it is worth taking time to examine a handful of historical film movements that have exerted a global influence on film art and to briefly introduce some of the most prominent filmmakers in national and niche cinema movements of the last century.

German Expressionism

As the name implies, German Expressionism was a movement in Germany that sought to express inner psychological and emotional states through external imagery. Between the two World Wars, Germany was a constitutional federal republic for the first time in its history. From 1918 until 1933, the so-called Weimar Republic was proclaimed. The 1920s brought relative prosperity and a sense of hopeful globalism. Cultures across Europe experienced a creative surge of artistic expression in film but also painting, literature, theater, architecture, sculpture, dance, and design.

Seeking to process the psychological and emotional trauma of the First World War, German filmmakers abandoned realism and turned their gaze inward. The dark, moody aesthetics of films like *Nosferatu* (1922) and *Metropolis* (1927) made an impression around the world. When the Nazis took power in the 1930s, many of these directors brought their talent to Hollywood and exerted a profound influence, particularly on the look and style of film noir and horror pictures. Their influence is seen today in the films of modern masters like Tim Burton and Guillermo del Toro.

Soviet Montage

By the 1920s, the technology of moving pictures had spread worldwide but its application varied widely from one national culture to the next. Unlike the Germans who sought an artistic outlet for wartime trauma, the filmmakers of the newly formed Union of Soviet Socialist Republics saw film as a revolutionary tool. From the time of the 1917 Revolution, the Soviet leadership used cinema as a vehicle for education, agitation, and propaganda in the largely illiterate countryside. Vladimir Lenin in his "Directive on the Film Business" in 1922, writes, "Special attention should be given to organizing film showings in the villages and in the East, where they are novelties and where our propaganda, therefore, will be all the more effective."

This pragmatic view is reflected in the approach of the early Soviet filmmakers who rejected the American style of continuity editing and instead formulated their own style, which became known as Soviet Montage. They proposed a "dialectic approach to film form" in which the meaning comes from the collision of images on screen. At the same time, they maintained the importance of keeping film production in the hands of the people instead of the Hollywood studio model of production.

Italian Neorealism

Benito Mussolini was a big fan of the movies. As the dictator of Italy from 1922 until 1943, he constructed a vast Hollywood-style movie studio covering a hundred-acre site on the outskirts of Rome. Known as *Cinecittá* or "Cinema City," it became a factory turning out a steady stream of aspirational films about attractive, wealthy Italians leading lives of romance and adventure. Dubbed "white telephone" movies, they provided escapist entertainment for a country in the grip of a drab, authoritarian regime. Mussolini installed his son Vittorio as editor of the influential film journal *Cinema* and founded the *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia*, a major film school that still exists today.

It is little wonder that Allied bombers saw *Cinecittá* as a prime target. The bombed-out remains became a displaced persons camp after the war. Without production facilities, young Italian filmmakers in the postwar era took matters into their own hands. Filming on location using handheld cameras, without the benefit of sound or lighting equipment, their movies about poverty and social injustice were cast with nonprofessional actors. The results had a documentary-like immediacy and power. This filmmaking approach, dubbed "Italian Neorealism," impacted audiences and filmmakers around the world.

French *Nouvelle Vague*

In the late 1950s, a decade after the Italian Neorealists made their mark, a group of young film students in Paris banded together in their rejection of the conventions and traditions of French cinema. They found a production model in the rough-and-ready approach of the Neorealists but sought their material in American crime movies and the Paris demimonde of hookers, pimps, and grifters. They experimented with editing styles inspired by improvisational jazz music and gleefully broke all the rules of narrative and visual continuity. Their films had an irrepressible energy and life that resonated with both moviegoers and critics.

Writing in the influential film journal *Cahiers du Cinema*, New Wave filmmakers and critics proposed a bold new model of cinema in which the director is the *auteur* or author of the film and the *caméra-stylo* is his pen. Directors such as Alfred Hitchcock and Orson Welles were held up as examples of film artists whose unique vision (rather than the studio, actors, or script) was responsible for a film's artistic value. The global success of French New Wave films like *The 400 Blows* (1959) and *Breathless* (1961) inspired similar "New Wave" film movements around the globe, including in the United States.

New Hollywood

For half a century, the model of film production in the United States was rigidly controlled by the Hollywood studio system. Together, the major and minor studios ran the industry. They determined what stories were told and who got to tell them. They packaged their talent, scrubbing each actor's life and identity of any nonnormative details that might embarrass the studio. For over three decades, they successfully enforced the strict censorship of the Motion Picture Production Code. Through the Hollywood Blacklist, they sought to prevent any writer, director, or actor with socialist or communist leanings from working in the movie business.

Then, in the mid-1960s, everything suddenly changed. Rock-and-roll music, the sexual revolution, and the antiwar movement were shaking the foundations of America's postwar status quo. Film had become a subject of legitimate academic study, and the "Film School Generation" was coming of age amid this cultural upheaval. Inspired by what the French New Wave filmmakers had pioneered a decade earlier, they set off with handheld cameras and nonprofessional actors and started making independent films that broke all the rules of the Hollywood system. They embraced auteur theory and proclaimed that the director, not the studio, was the author of the film. They made movies like *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *The Graduate* (1967), *Easy Rider* (1969), and *The Wild Bunch* (1969) that dealt explicitly with sexuality and violence. Suddenly, the Motion Picture Production Code seemed an irrelevant relic, and it was summarily abandoned. The studios jumped on the bandwagon and started bankrolling young, independent filmmakers. New Hollywood Cinema was born.

Other Voices

Surrealism

The Surrealism movement originated in Paris in the 1920s and challenged traditional art forms by using absurd or shocking imagery. Acclaimed Surrealism filmmakers Louis Buñuel and Marcel Duchamp made their marks through this movement, with such films as *Anémic Cinéma* (1926) directed by Marcel Duchamp under the pseudonym Rrose Sélavy and Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) made in collaboration with Salvador Dalí.

Poetic Realism

Also originating in France, Poetic Realist films feature a nostalgic tone and often focus on unfulfilled love. This movement influenced both Italian Neorealism and the French New

Wave, as filmmaking trends started to move towards naturalism. Jean Renoir was the most recognizable director of the period with *Les Bas-fonds* (1936) and *La Grande Illusion* (1937).

British New Wave

Naturalistic, spontaneous, and shot in black and white with nonactors in real locations, British New Wave films focus on the working class and the hardships of daily life. *Look Back in Anger* (1959), *A Taste of Honey* (1961), and *The Sporting Life* (1963) are classics of this movement.

Cinéma Vérite

French for "truthful cinema" or "cinema of truth," this movement in documentary filmmaking began in France during the 1960s. It involved spending several months (or more) immersed in a community, building trust, and following characters as their lives unfold. Notable films shot in the *Cinéma Vérite* style include *Grey Gardens* (1975), *Paris Is Burning* (1990), and *Hoop Dreams* (1994).

Third Cinema

Third Cinema, also known as the Cinema of Decolonization, emerged in the 1960s in various countries of the Global South, including Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Films such as Satyajit Ray's *The World of Apu* (1959) and Getino and Solanas's *The Hour of the Furnaces* (1968) sought to create a cinema that was politically engaged, socially conscious, and anticolonial in orientation. Third Cinema films focused on issues of imperialism, cultural identity, and the struggles of postcolonial societies.

New German Cinema

The films of New German Cinema distinguish themselves as low-budget indie movies embracing artistic merit over commercial success. Internationally acclaimed directors Wim Wenders and Werner Herzog bloomed as filmmakers in this movement, with films such as *Alice in the Cities* (1974), *The Tin Drum* (1979), *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), and *Wings of Desire* (1987).

Cinéma du Look

Centered on French directors who emphasize style and spectacle, these films often follow the story of a young outcast navigating the fringes of society. Popular filmmakers Luc

Besson, Jean-Jacques Beineix, and Leos Carax are known for visually stunning *Cinéma du Look* films such as *Diva* (1981), *Boy Meets Girl* (1984), *La Femme Nikita* (1990), and *Léon: The Professional* (1994).

Dogme 95

Conceived in Denmark by directors Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg as pushback against the studio system, the films of this movement focus on story, actors, and theme as opposed to special effects or technology. Dogma 95 aimed to strip away artifice and return to the fundamentals of filmmaking. Based on a manifesto written by the two filmmakers, movies such as *The Idiots* (1998) and *The Celebration* (1998) reflect this movement.

Iranian New Wave

Characterized by an emphasis on realism, social commentary, and poetic storytelling, the Iranian New Wave brought attention to Iranian cinema with films like *Close-Up* (1990), *The White Balloon* (1995), and *Gabbeh* (1996). These films confront social and political issues and showcase humanistic tales of ordinary people.

Japanese New Wave

The Japanese New Wave emerged in the 1960s and challenged traditional Japanese cinema by adopting a more experimental and avant-garde approach. In *Tokyo Twilight* (1957), *The Pornographers* (1966), and *In the Realm of the Senses* (1976), filmmakers like Nagisa Oshima and Yasujirō Ozu explored themes of sexuality, alienation, and the impact of rapid modernization on Japanese Society.

Australian New Wave

The Australian New Wave introduced fresh new voices to the world of cinema. Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), George Miller's *Mad Max* (1979), and Baz Luhrmann's *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) featured stories that reflect the unique landscapes, cultural identity, and social issues of Australia. This movement revitalized Australian cinema and introduced a new generation of talented filmmakers to the international stage.

Brazilian *Cinema Novo*

The *Cinema Novo* movement in Brazil emerged in the late 1950s and early 60s and explored themes of poverty, inequality, and cultural identity in films like *Barren Lives* (1963) and *Black God, White Devil* (1964). The movement aimed to reflect the social and political realities of Brazil using innovative narrative structures, poetic imagery, and a rejection of Hollywood conventions.

Portuguese *Novo Cinema*

Exploring Portugal's political and social landscape, *Novo Cinema* explored colonialism, cultural identity, and the effects of dictatorship with a poetic and introspective style that diverged from conventional storytelling techniques. *Aniki Bóbó* (1942) and *Change of Life* (1966) are representative examples of this movement.

Czechoslovak New Wave

The Czechoslovak New Wave, which flourished in the 1960s, brought forth a wave of bold and innovative filmmakers such as Milos Forman, director of *The Firemen's Ball* (1967), and Jirí Menzel who directed *Closely Watched Trains* (1967). This movement employed surrealism, satire, and dark humor to critique the oppressive regime of the time. The movement showcased the rebellious spirit of the filmmakers as they defied official censorship and expanded the boundaries of cinematic expression.

Hong Kong New Wave

The Hong Kong New Wave showcased a new generation of filmmakers, including Tsui Hark, John Woo, and Wong Kar-wai. The movement blended action, crime, and melodrama while exploring themes of identity, urbanization, and the challenges of a rapidly changing society in films like *The Killer* (1989), *A Better Tomorrow* (1991), and *Chungking Express* (1994).

Nuevo Cine Mexicano

The Mexican New Wave burst on the scene with films such as Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Amores Perros* (2000), Alfonso Cuarón's *Y Tu Mamá También* (2001), and Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006). This movement tackled issues of social inequality,

political corruption, and cultural identity while incorporating gritty realism, visual poetry, and a fresh perspective on Mexican society.

Romanian New Wave

The Romanian New Wave gained international recognition with filmmakers such as Cristi Puiu who made *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* (2005), Corneliu Porumboiu director of *12:08 East of Bucharest* (2006), and Cristian Mungiu director of *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (2007). This movement embraced a minimalist and observational style, focusing on the everyday struggles and moral dilemmas faced by ordinary people in postcommunist Romania. Their films offer a stark and unflinching portrayal of society and the complexities of human nature.

Taiwanese New Wave

The Taiwanese New Wave emerged with films such as *A City of Sadness* (1989) directed by Hou Hsiao-Hsien, *Yi Yi* (2000) directed by Edward Yang, and Tsai Ming-liang's *Vive L'Amour* (1994). This movement explored themes of cultural identity, urbanization, and the clash between tradition and modernity in Taiwan. The movement was characterized by its long takes, contemplative pacing, and poignant storytelling which offered a nuanced perspective on Taiwanese society.

L. A. Rebellion

The L. A. Rebellion emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as graduates of UCLA Film School such as Charles Burnett, Julie Dash, and Haile Gerima sought to challenge and expand the representation of African Americans in cinema with films like *Killer of Sheep* (1978), *Bush Mama* (1979), and *Daughters of the Dust* (1991). The movement focused on personal, socially conscious storytelling, exploring themes of racial identity, community, and the African diaspora.

No Wave Cinema

No Wave Cinema appeared in New York City in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a response to the city's gritty and economically depressed landscape. Filmmaker Susan Seidelman made *Smithereens* (1982), Jim Jarmusch directed *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984), and

Richard Kern released *The Right Side of My Brain* (1985). These low-budget, experimental films embraced a do-it-yourself ethos and focused on themes of urban alienation, punk culture, and countercultural movements.

Parallel Cinema

Parallel Cinema refers to a movement in India that reached its peak in the 1970s and 1980s. Indian filmmakers such as Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, and Shyam Benegal broke away from the conventions of mainstream Bollywood cinema to explore social and political issues in *The Apu Trilogy* (1955–1959), *Bhuvan Shome* (1969), and *Ankur* (1974). With a focus on realistic storytelling, these films depict the lives of ordinary people and address themes of social inequality, the rural–urban divide, and complexities of Indian society.

Yugoslav Black Wave

The Yugoslav Black Wave was a response to the political and social climate of Yugoslavia in the 1960s. Filmmaker Dušan Makavejev directed *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* (1971), Aleksandar Petrović made *It Rains in My Village* (1968), and Želimir Žilnik made *Early Works* (1969). The films all employ dark humor, surrealism, and unconventional narratives to critique the Yugoslav socialist regime. The movement challenged censorship and explored themes of political repression, sexual liberation, and the search for personal identity.

Chinese Fifth and Sixth Generation

The Chinese Fifth and Sixth Generation movements in the People's Republic of China appeared in the years after the Cultural Revolution. During this period, Zhang Yimou made *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991), Jia Zhangke made *Still Life* (2006), and Chen Kaige made *Farewell My Concubine* (2014). These films broke away from the conventions of socialist realism and used a more individualistic and artistic approach to storytelling. Both movements tackled themes of history, cultural traditions, and the challenges of modernization in China.

Scandinavian Revival

The Scandinavian Revival, also known as Nordic Noir, gained prominence in the early 21st century, primarily in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. Films associated with the movement

include Tomas Alfredson's *Let the Right One In* (2008) and Susanne Bier's *In a Better World* (2011). The movement blends elements of crime fiction, psychological drama, and social realism while exploring themes of morality, isolation, and darker aspects of human nature.

All these movements share a revolutionary spirit that challenges traditional norms, expands the boundaries of storytelling, and offers unique cultural perspectives. They remind us of the rich diversity and constant evolution of the cinematic landscape, inviting audiences to explore and appreciate the diverse voices and visions that help shape the world of film.

12 | AWAKE

Realism • Neorealism • New Cinema

"In a sense everything is realistic. I see no line between the imaginary and the real."

—Federico Fellini

Imagine that you are a movie camera recording continuously from the moment you open your eyes in the morning until you go to bed at night. The unedited film would fade in from the darkness of sleep to the sound of an alarm clock ringing. We might see a blurred image of a bedroom followed by an upward movement as you get out of bed. The rest of this short film would likely take place from a point of view (POV) located approximately five feet off the ground (the average height of a set of human eyeballs) with few if any breaks in continuity.

Movements of the camera would look very much like the movements of your body through space. The camera lens would behave like your eyes (a focal length of approximately 50mm on 35mm film), slowly scanning the environment and lingering on significant visual details. This would continue until you lay back down in bed and close your eyes to sleep.

Capturing Reality

The first films—like the first photographs—were simply a visual record of the world surrounding early filmmakers. When August and Louis Lumière hit upon the technology to capture and replay moving images, they chose as their first subjects the people and events taking place around them: a train pulling into the station, a couple feeding a baby, or a neighbor watering his garden. Their *actualities* were short, unedited clips of everyday life that were shot with the intention of capturing reality on film. The film *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* (Lumière, 1895) is an example of the filmmakers' limited vision of the potential applications of motion picture technology. It simply shows a group of workers leaving their father's factory at the end of a workday. A straightforward record of a moment of ordinary life. There are no cuts and the camera does not move.

Thomas Edison and his kinetograph and kinetoscope had similar capabilities. However, like the Lumière Brothers, Edison lacked the creative insight to see the far-reaching potential of this new technology. Edison's early films were equally pedestrian: walks on the beach, pillow fights, theatrical performances—all shot from a single vantage point without edits.

Documentary

Documentary films follow the tradition of Edison and the Lumière Brothers. They represent a band at one extreme of the realism–formalism spectrum. Unlike narrative fiction films that comprise most theatrical releases, documentaries are not "lies in service of truth." Instead, they are reality in service of truth. Most of us are regularly exposed to documentary media in our daily lives—whether through YouTube software tutorials, reality television shows, or adventure films such as *Solo Face* (2018).

A documentarian does not write a screenplay, invent fictional characters, create their dialogue, and give them actions to perform. Instead, they chose a subject and reveal something about that subject by filming reality. Documentary films can be factual, instructional, persuasive, or propaganda, and their goal can be to inform, entertain, criticize, or celebrate—sometimes all the above.

The important thing to remember is that a documentary film can never be entirely objective. It is a mediated version of reality. The documentarian makes a series of choices during production regarding the contents of the documentary and the way that content is presented that alters our perception of it. Like fiction films, the documentary is constructed to convey a particular point of view. Even if there are no cuts, the documentarian must choose where to put the camera and when to turn it on.

There are a variety of techniques used in documentaries, including interviews, archival footage, animation, graphics, and reenactments. Sometimes a fiction filmmaker will incorporate these elements into a fiction film to bolster an impression of realism. For example, in *Reds* (1981), director Warren Beatty uses interviews with living figures who comment on the events that inspired the fiction film.

Documentary has the power to shine a light on pressing issues and to inspire social change. Contemporary documentarian Michael Moore has brought attention to the crisis of gun violence in America in *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), the failure of the US healthcare system in *Sicko* (2007), and corporate corruption in *Capitalism: A Love Story* (2009).

In its most extreme form, the documentary becomes propaganda. Using highly selective footage and arranging it in a targeted way, it is possible to present a distorted vision in the guise of objective reality. Political campaign ads often cross the line into propaganda. Extremists of all stripes use propaganda to forward their cause and attract new converts. By way of example, consider one of the most brilliant (and notorious) documentaries in film history: *Triumph of the Will* (1935).

Leni Riefenstahl (1902–2003) was in her early thirties when Adolf Hitler hired her to document the 1934 Nazi Party rally in Nuremberg, Germany. Employing all the formal tools of cinema, she created a visual masterpiece with aerial footage, sweeping camera movements, dramatic lighting, slow motion, and a majestic score that combine to establish Hitler as an almost mythic figure. This sanitized and idealized portrait succeeded in promoting Nazi ideology at a time when the atrocities of the Nazi regime and the genocide of millions were already underway.

Narrative Realism

Italian neorealist filmmakers like Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica, and Luchino Visconti created films in the 1940s and 1950s shot on location with nonprofessional actors, giving them a gritty, documentary-like feel. In the 1960s, the French New Wave employed similar techniques, with filmmakers like Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut creating personal and introspective work, yet still grounded in the realities of everyday life. These films often experimented with narrative structure and storytelling techniques but still hewed close to reality and sought authenticity and truthfulness in their overall approach.

Most of today's filmmakers incorporate elements of both realism and formalism in their work, using a variety of techniques to capture the complexities of modern life. For example, in *City of God* (2002), Brazilian director Fernando Meirelles uses a handheld camera and a nonlinear narrative structure to create a sense of documentary realism in

his portrayal of life in a poverty-stricken favela in Rio de Janeiro. Similarly, in *Boyhood* (2014), Richard Linklater uses an ambitious approach in which the same actors are filmed over the course of 12 years to create a realistic portrayal of a boy growing up and coming of age.

Film realism is powerful because it reflects real life in its depiction of human emotions and experiences. Realistic films explore themes such as love, loss, and conflict in a way that touches audiences because it resonates with their own lives. A movie about a family struggling to cope with the loss of a loved one might touch on themes of grief and healing that are highly relatable to most viewers.

The director Alfonso Cuarón has been influenced by Italian Neorealism and often uses his films to explore the lives of ordinary people, employing long takes and natural lighting to create a feeling of realism. His film *Roma* (2018) is a tribute to the Neorealist tradition, depicting the life of a housekeeper and her employers in 1970s Mexico City. This semi-autobiographical film was shot in black and white and features naturalistic performances from both professional and non-professional actors. The film has been praised for its attention to detail and authenticity.

Verisimilitude

Verisimilitude refers to the appearance of truth or realism in the cinematic world. It is the degree to which the world created by a film appears consistent and organic, even if that world is a fictional one. Verisimilitude is often conflated with realism, but it is important to note that verisimilitude is about the appearance of reality, rather than a replica of it. Films can create their own distinct reality, with internal logic and rules that may diverge from real life. For example, science fiction or fantasy films can create entirely new worlds with their own rules of physics and reality that are very different from our own. James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009) is remote from reality but nevertheless is meticulous in its verisimilitude.

Realistic Camera

Realistic films use handheld camera or a naturalistic camera style to convey immediacy and intimacy. The camera may move in a way that mirrors human movement, rather than being locked down or overly stylized. Natural or naturalistic lighting is often employed. This means using available light sources, such as sunlight or streetlights, to create a natural

look, rather than relying on artificial lighting. Realistic films may use on-location sound recording to capture the natural sounds of the environment, including background noise, dialogue, and other sounds that add to the sense of reality.

Naturalistic Performance

Performances in realistic films tend to be more naturalistic than in a stylized or theatrical film. Actors are encouraged to improvise or to use their own words, gestures, and actions. Real-world locations (rather than studio sets) are often employed for the sake of authenticity. Costumes and props in realistic films reflect the period or social context of the story. Finally, it is worth noting that there is a range of approaches to realism in cinema, and not all realistic films share the same characteristics.

Reasons for Realism

There are many reasons why a director might choose to utilize a realistic visual approach in their work. Realistic visuals create a sense of immersion and verisimilitude that helps the audience to feel they are experiencing the events of the film firsthand. This can be particularly effective in films that deal with social issues and historical events. This approach can be used to explore complex emotional states and themes that might be difficult to convey using more stylized or abstract techniques. For example, a realistic visual approach might be effective in conveying the sense of isolation and loneliness experienced by a character struggling with mental illness.

A realistic approach can highlight the authenticity of a story or emphasize the real-world context in which the events of the film take place. This can be particularly effective in movies based on true stories or historical events. In action films, a realistic approach can add to the suspense and urgency of the story. Techniques such as handheld camera and long takes aid the filmmaker in drawing the audience into the action. This can also create a sense of intimacy between the audience and characters in the film. In some cases, a filmmaker may choose to utilize a realistic visual style as a way of challenging traditional filmmaking conventions and experimenting with new techniques.

Cinematic realism aims to present stories and characters in a manner that closely resembles real-life situations and experiences. It seeks to create authenticity and believability by portraying events, settings, and human behavior in a manner that aligns with the viewer's

perception of reality. It can be observed in every aspect of the film, including storytelling, acting, cinematography, and production design.

It's important to note that realism in film is not a strict adherence to reality but rather an artistic interpretation that mimics reality in varying degrees. Filmmakers may still employ creative techniques, narrative devices, and aesthetic choices to enhance storytelling and evoke emotional responses. The extent of realism can vary from film to film, with some embracing a heightened sense of reality or incorporating elements of fantasy or symbolism while still maintaining a core foundation of authenticity.

In the Realist Tradition

Director Martin Scorsese's use of realism in *Taxi Driver* (1976) has a powerful impact on the story. The film deploys formal elements, such as cinematography, production design, and acting, in a realistic manner that conveys the protagonist's alienation and dangerous mental state while connecting with the audience on a profound level. Themes of alienation and societal decay are reinforced by this realistic approach. In one notable scene, the protagonist Travis Bickle (played by Robert De Niro) stands in front of the bathroom mirror in his squalid apartment. The camera focuses on his face as he prepares himself for the night ahead. The close-up accentuates the violent emotion in his eyes, his furrowed brow, and tightly held musculature. The cracked mirror becomes a reflection of the character's fractured psyche and deteriorating mental state. The cluttered bathroom, peeling wallpaper, and harsh lighting all contribute to the realism of the scene. The attention to detail in production design adds authenticity, making it feel like a glimpse into a real person's world. As Travis talks to his reflection in the mirror, the dialogue further reveals his alienation and captures the raw and distorted nature of his mental process. The realistic dialogue, combined with De Niro's naturalistic performance, creates a deeply personal and emotionally charged moment.

Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men* (2006) features a breathtaking scene that lasts for several minutes without any visible cuts as the camera follows the main character, played by Clive Owen, through a chaotic battle zone. The scene's realism is heightened by the handheld camera work, natural lighting, and immersive sound design, allowing the viewer to feel that they are in the middle of the action. In *Gravity* (2013), the director opens the film with a gripping scene in which two astronauts, played by Sandra Bullock and George Clooney, suffer a catastrophic accident in space. The extended scene achieves striking realism through its depiction of weightlessness, use of 3D technology, and intense sound design which combine to create a visceral experience for the audience.

In *No Country for Old Men* (2007), the Coen Brothers use a realistic approach that reinforces the film's overarching themes of fate, chance, and the moral ambiguity of human nature. In one pivotal scene, ruthless and enigmatic hitman Anton Chigurh (played by Javier Bardem) engages in a tense conversation with the owner of a rural gas station. The cinematography utilizes a combination of wide shots and close-ups to capture the psychological tension between the two men. The Coen Brothers employ a static camera, emphasizing realism and allowing the audience to focus on performance and dialogue. Lingering close-ups of the characters' faces showcase their expressions and reveal their internal conflicts. The scene is bathed in naturalistic lighting, creating a sense of authenticity. The color palette features mostly muted earth tones, reflecting the desolate setting and the bleak nature of the narrative. Ambient sounds, such as the buzzing of the overhead lights and the clinking of the coins, heighten the tension. Minimal nondiegetic music remains in the background, allowing the dialogue and the characters' interaction to take center stage. The performances in the scene are naturalistic, contrasting the chilling facade of the hitman with the vulnerability and desperation of the gas station owner. Editing contributes to the scene's realism as it cuts between the characters' faces, allowing the audience to feel the weight of each word. The scene's realistic approach reinforces the overall theme of the film while grounding it in a tangible and relatable reality that leaves the viewer questioning the unpredictable nature of fate and the choices we all make in life.

In the climactic scene of Damien Chazelle's *Whiplash* (2014), the main character performs an unscripted drum solo on stage at a jazz music competition. The scene's realism is enhanced by tight close-ups of the actor's hands and face, capturing the physical and emotional toll of his performance. The precise editing and energetic camerawork intensify the audience's connection to the character and the music.

In *The Revenant* (2015), Alejandro González Iñárritu presents a harrowing scene where the main character, played by Leonardo DiCaprio, is viciously attacked by a grizzly bear. Intense realism is achieved through a combination of seamless visual effects, raw performance, and visceral sound design. The audience feels every bone-crushing blow and is immersed in the brutal struggle which plays out in one long, uninterrupted sequence.

Other Faces of Film Realism

Realism is well-suited to smaller, independent films. For example, Chlóe Zhao's *Nomadland* (2020) tells the story of a woman named Fern (played by Frances McDormand) who travels across the American West in a van after losing her job and home in the Great Recession. The film is shot on location and features non-actors alongside professional performers

and aims to capture the beauty and struggle of a largely forgotten demographic of American society. *The Florida Project* (2017) directed by Sean Baker is set in the shadow of Disney World and tells the story of a young mother and her daughter living in a low-budget motel. The film features nonprofessional actors and an improvisational shooting style that generates realism and immediacy while capturing the harsh realities of life on the fringes of society. *Manchester by the Sea* (2016) is the story of Lee Chandler (played by Casey Affleck) who returns to his hometown after his brother's death to care for his nephew. The film features naturalistic performances and an understated visual style that reveals the quiet pain and trauma, which shape its characters' lives. *Moonlight* (2016) directed by Barry Jenkins is a coming-of-age drama that follows the life of a young man named Chiron at three different stages of his life. The film explores themes of identity, race, and sexuality through an intimate and personal lens that records the film's naturalistic performances with a restrained visual style.

These are just a few examples of the many recent films that utilize realism in their approach. These films strive to capture the complexities of real life with an emphasis on character over spectacle. They create the illusion of reality on the screen by using naturalistic performance, unobtrusive cinematography and lighting, natural sound, and settings and costumes that match their real-world context.

13 | Dream

Oneiros • Formalism • Antirealism

"All human beings are also dream beings. Dreaming ties all mankind together."

—Jack Kerouac

The Greek noun *oneiros* refers to dreams, and of all the arts, cinema is the most powerfully oneiric. When you buy a movie ticket, walk into the theater, and sit down in the audience, you have entered a dream that you will share with every other person in the theater. This shared dream may resemble waking life or be something totally unfamiliar. Cinematic experiences that hew closer to dreams are often described as "antirealistic," while films that draw attention to the tools and techniques used to convey the narrative are classified as "formalistic."

Film formalism highlights the unique artistry and aesthetic qualities of cinema. Instead of simply conveying an unadorned slice of reality, formalistic films use highly stylized visuals, nonlinear narrative structures, and other techniques that celebrate cinema's unique capabilities. Antirealism goes even further in the direction of dreams, dispensing with verisimilitude and suspension of disbelief in the interest of exploring other realms of imagination and experience.

The early films of the Lumières and Edison were focused on capturing and reproducing everyday life and real-world events as accurately as possible. These films were short and simple, with little in the way of artistic experimentation beyond the simple act of recording moving images. The move away from the realistic approach of the Lumière Brothers and

Thomas Edison toward more formalistic filmmaking was fueled by a desire to explore the unique possibilities of the new medium and create novel ways of telling stories and evoking emotions. By experimenting with new techniques and approaches, filmmakers were able to push the boundaries of what was possible with film and create a richer experience for the viewer.

A key factor in this shift was the emergence of film as an art form, rather than just a novelty or means of recording reality. Filmmakers began to tap into the unique possibilities of the medium, using techniques such as close-ups, editing, and special effects to uncover novel ways to convey a story or evoke an emotion. Emphasizing the aesthetic and technical aspects of cinema (rather than the surface content or narrative), formalism calls attention to how the film is constructed and ways it communicates meaning to the viewer. Film formalists use a wide range of visual techniques, including camera angles, lighting, editing, sound, and visual and audio effects to create a memorable visual impression unique to the film and the vision of its maker.

Kuleshov, Eisenstein, and Vertov

Russian filmmaker Lev Kuleshov (1899–1970) theorized that a single, uninflected image in a motion picture lacks a fixed value and that its meaning is determined by its juxtaposition with other images in sequence. To prove his theory, he filmed a popular actor at the time (Ivan Mosjoukine) wearing a completely neutral facial expression. Kulashov then edited this shot together with the image of a steaming bowl of soup and showed it to an audience. They all agreed that the actor was expressing extreme hunger in his performance. When he edited the same shot of the actor with footage of a dead child in a coffin, the audience interpreted the performance as an expression of profound sorrow. In a third instance, Kuleshov cut the actor's footage together with an image of a woman reclining seductively on a divan. The audience perceived his performance as an expression of intense desire. The same footage of the actor was "read" by the audience in entirely different ways depending on the context. Kuleshov's montage experiments in the 1910s formed the theoretical basis for the Soviet Montage movement that followed.

Sergei Eisenstein (1898–1948) was one of the pioneers of this new approach to filmmaking. Eisenstein believed that film had the power to convey complex ideas and emotions through the juxtaposition of images. In *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *October* (1928), he juxtaposed starkly contrasting images to create meaning, using techniques such as rapid editing, exaggerated camera angles, and dynamic composition to generate visual dynamism and energy.

Dziga Vertov pushed film formalism even further with his *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). The film consists of footage of everyday urban life in several Soviet cities along with sound effects, music, and narration. The film illustrates virtually every cinematic and editing technique existent at the time, including slow motion and timelapse, freeze frames, split screen, and double exposure. Vertov's film shows life in the urban centers of Soviet Russian during the 1920s but, more importantly, it calls attention to the filmmaking process that produced it. This self-reflexive or meta-cinematic approach resulted in a formalistic visual "poem" that still inspires filmmakers a hundred years later.

Experimentation

The 1920s was a decade of creative ferment around the world. Filmmakers everywhere experimented with new techniques and approaches. The German Expressionists used stylized sets and dramatic lighting to create heightened emotional intensity. The French Avant-Garde pioneered slow motion, superimposition, and surreal imagery to create an otherworldly atmosphere. French Impressionist filmmakers used cinematic tools to capture a unique vision of life's fleeting moments and sensations inspired by Impressionist painting. For example, Abel Gance's *Napoleon* (1927) includes dreamy impressionistic images alongside cutting-edge formal techniques like multiple exposure and wide-screen presentation.

At the same time, Surrealist filmmakers like Jean Cocteau, Louis Buñuel, and Salvador Dalí sought to explore the subconscious mind and irrational aspects of human nature using cinema. Rejecting traditional narrative, they applied film's formal tools to create dream-like and symbolic images designed to directly impact the psychology of the audience and provoke an emotional response. *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) resulted from a collaboration between Buñuel and Dalí and remains one of the most influential works of experimental cinema. Featuring provocative imagery (e.g., an eyeball sliced open with a straight razor), religious iconography, and explicit sexuality, it continues to shock and inspire.

American Avant-Garde films of the 1940s and 1950s were characterized by a highly experimental and abstract approach incorporating techniques such as animation, collage, and found footage to create a unique visual style. Maya Deren (1917–1961) was a key figure in this period. Her *Meshes in the Afternoon* (1943) is a landmark experimental film. Deren believed that the role of cinema was to create an experience rather to simply entertain the audience. Her short black-and-white films blend choreography, poetry, psychology, and groundbreaking camera and editing techniques to achieve this goal.

In the 1960s and 1970s, American Structuralist filmmakers focused on the formal properties of film, such as duration, light, and space. Structural films often used a minimalist

visual aesthetic and explored the physical properties of the film medium itself. American filmmaker Stan Brakhage (1933–2003) was one of the most prominent figures during this period. Brakhage's techniques included handheld camerawork, in-camera editing, multiple exposure, paint applied directly to the film, scratching the celluloid, and hand-drawn animation. Rejecting narrative, his films are pure art: abstract and nonrepresentational. *Dog Star Man* (1961–1964) and *Mothlight* (1963) are notable examples of his aesthetic. Experimental films such as these represent a band at the formalist extreme of the realism–formalism spectrum.

American visual artist Bill Viola used high-speed cinema cameras to create immersive and meditative museum and gallery installations. His work exploits the formal properties of film to explore themes of spirituality, consciousness, and the human experience. Viola's films feature actors, mise-en-scène, and natural elements that are combined to invoke an intense emotional experience in the viewer with a minimum of narrative structure. *The Greeting* (1995), *The Passions* (2000), and *Going Forth By Day* (2002) are some of his best-known works.

Blurring the Lines

A classic illustration of the formalist approach to cinematic storytelling in fiction narrative film is Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). The director uses highly stylized visuals and an unconventional narrative structure to explore themes of free will and morality. Richard Linklater's *Waking Life* (2001) blurs the lines between waking life and dreams, using animation and surreal imagery to explore philosophical ideas and concepts. In many ways, the film is like a dream. It does not follow a traditional narrative structure and instead jumps from one scene to another, often without a clear sense of time or place. Using surreal imagery and nonlinear storytelling, the director presents a series of disconnected scenes and conversations that are loosely linked by the central theme. The narrative explores the idea of consciousness and the nature of reality much as dreams reflect our subconscious thoughts and desires.

Whiplash, *Elvis*, and *Black Swan*

Contemporary directors Baz Luhrmann, Darren Aronofsky, and Damien Chazelle are just a few recent examples of filmmakers known for taking a formalistic approach to film storytelling. In Chazelle's *La La Land* (2016) and *Babylon* (2022), the editing and mise-en-scène

create a vision of the world that is highly stylized and distinctly his own. Australian director Baz Luhrmann pushes film formalism even further in operatic film spectacles like *Moulin Rouge!* (2001), *The Great Gatsby* (2013), and *Elvis* (2022). Darren Aronofsky is known for surrealistic treatment of controversial themes such as addiction and mental illness in *Pi* (1998), *Requiem for a Dream* (2000), and *Black Swan* (2010).

All these films challenge the viewer's perception of reality and the boundaries between the real and the imaginary. They use surreal or dreamlike imagery, nonlinear storytelling, and unconventional editing to create an atmosphere that is very different from our everyday world.

Eyes Open and Dreaming

Motion pictures and dreams have always shared similarities in the way they represent and evoke experiences. Both motion pictures and dreams are visual experiences that are perceived by the brain as if seen through the eyes. In both instances, images are processed and interpreted by the brain to create a sense of visual continuity and coherence. Both evoke emotions and sensations in the viewer. Just as a particularly vivid or impactful dream can leave the dreamer with a strong emotional reaction, a particularly moving scene in a movie can elicit a real and profound emotional response.

Movies and dreams can both depict scenarios and events that are not possible in everyday life. Dreams conjure impossible scenarios that are unconstrained by the rules of physics or reality, while movies use special effects and computer-generated imagery to create fantastical environments. Both transport us to new worlds, evoke profound emotions, and challenge our perceptions.

Formalistic films use a variety of techniques such as unusual camera angles, unconventional editing, and expressionistic lighting to convey a mood or feeling in much the same way a dream distorts reality in its presentation of impressions and images. These films often break with the conventions of traditional narrative storytelling and take on the disjointed and nonlinear storytelling of a dream. They may use nonlinear edits, jump cuts, or other techniques that disrupt the continuity of the story and challenge our perception of time and space just as dreams present events happening out of sequence or in illogical order.

Films and dreams both rely heavily on symbolism and metaphor to convey meaning. While dreams use symbolic imagery to represent complex emotions or psychological states, movies employ symbols, colors, and visual cues to convey meaning and emotion without the need for dialogue or exposition. They share the same visual language, unconventional storytelling, and intense emotion.

Poetry of Images

Poetic association is often utilized in formalistic films to form a connection between seemingly unrelated images or ideas in a way that creates resonance or emotional impact. This technique relies on the viewer's ability to draw meaning from the juxtaposition of these images, rather than from a clear narrative or plot.

An example of poetic association in formalistic films is the use of visual motifs, such as recurring objects or symbols, to create unity or meaning. For instance, a filmmaker might use a recurring image of a flower to represent the fragility of human life or the passing of time. By repeating this image throughout the film, the filmmaker creates coherence and unity between individual scenes or shots.

Other examples of poetic association include abstract or surreal imagery to evoke a dreamlike atmosphere. For instance, a filmmaker might use slow motion or superimposition to disorient the viewer. By using these techniques, the filmmaker creates a poetic or lyrical impression beyond the literal meaning of the images. This allows them to generate meaning using imagery and symbolism, rather than simply through the plot or dialogue. In this way, they tap into our emotional associations and achieve a deeper impression.

The traditions of formalism and antirealism continue to be a vital force in contemporary cinema, with many current filmmakers employing these approaches in their work. Christopher Nolan is renowned for complex narrative structures and unconventional camera work. In films like *Memento* (2001), *Inception* (2010), and *Tenet* (2020), the director uses nonlinear storytelling and stunning visual effects to create a sense of disorientation and heightened emotion. Wes Anderson uses a highly stylized visual aesthetic, which often includes symmetrical framing, bright colors, and meticulous attention to detail. Films like *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012) and *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014) are filled with quirky characters and surreal imagery, conveying a whimsical and poetic tone. David Lynch's films impact the audience with surreal and dreamlike images, as well as sound and music that elevate atmosphere and emotion. In films like *Blue Velvet* (1986) and *Mulholland Drive* (2001), Lynch creates disorientation and unease by using unconventional camera angles and abstract imagery that leave a lasting and powerful impression. Denis Villeneuve is known for his striking visuals and sound design in films such as *Arrival* (2016), *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), and *Dune* (2021). Villeneuve's stunning effects create an otherworldly experience and generate poetic resonance and emotional impact. Paul Thomas Anderson uses long takes and tracking shots to evoke a feeling of immersion. In films like *There Will Be Blood* (2007) and *The Master* (2013), he uses unconventional camera angles and striking visual imagery to inject poetic resonance into the narrative.

Just as movements such as Cubism and Abstract Expressionism upended the 20th Century art world and changed the way we look at painting, formalism and antirealism challenge the conventions of motion picture storytelling and encourage us to look at the world in a new way.

Blending Realism and Formalism

In practice, most directors employ both realistic and formalist elements in their work. For example, Quentin Tarantino is known for his highly stylized films but he also incorporates aspects of realism, such as detailed character development, naturalistic dialogue, and authentic settings. Tarantino's approach to filmmaking can be described as a fusion of formalist and realist elements. He uses formal elements to craft a distinctive visual and narrative style, but he also places a strong emphasis on character and dialogue, as well as real-world issues and themes.

Steven Spielberg has worked in a variety of genres and styles throughout his career. While he is associated with mainstream Hollywood blockbusters, his approach to filmmaking incorporates elements of both realism and formalism. In his more realistic films, such as *Schindler's List* (1993) and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), the director employs techniques such as handheld camera, naturalistic lighting, and gritty, unvarnished settings to create a sense of authenticity and immediacy. In these films, he seeks to capture the essence of historical events and create a powerful emotional connection with the audience. However, Spielberg has also employed formalist techniques in other films, particularly his work in the adventure and science fiction genres. He is known for his use of elaborate special effects, fast-paced editing, and stylized camera movements to generate energy and spectacle. These films often push the boundaries of visual storytelling and embrace the possibilities of cinema as a medium for creative expression.

Stanley Kubrick is often associated with formalism, as his films are known for their meticulously crafted visuals and intricate use of cinematic techniques. However, Kubrick also employed cinematic realism, particularly in his early work. In films such as *The Killing* (1956) and *Paths of Glory* (1957), the director employed handheld camera, naturalistic lighting, and realistic settings to generate authenticity and immediacy. He was particularly interested in exploring the psychological and emotional experiences of his characters and used realistic techniques to capture the nuances of human behavior and interaction. Kubrick's body of work can be seen as a fusion of realism and formalism, with his early works emphasizing the former and his later works emphasizing the latter.

Alfred Hitchcock was known for the use of formalism in his films. He was particularly interested in exploring the technical and visual possibilities of cinema and used techniques such as elaborate camera movements, unconventional editing, and dramatic light and shadow to create a heightened sense of tension and suspense in his films. Hitchcock's films generally reflect a stylized and controlled visual aesthetic, with a focus on precision and detail. The director was keenly interested in manipulating the audience's emotions and perceptions using cinematic technique, frequently employing point-of-view shots and subjective camera angles to create identification with his characters.

However, in tandem with this tendency toward formalism, Hitchcock consistently incorporated elements of realism. He was particularly interested in exploring the psychology of his characters and often used realistic and relatable settings and situations. He was known for employing everyday objects in his mise-en-scène, which added to the realism of the scene and bolstered the verisimilitude of his stories.

14 | Genre

Crime ◆ War ◆ Horror

"I've seen things you people wouldn't believe."

—Roy Batty in Bladerunner (1982)

Screenplay by David Peoples

From the dawn of motion pictures, films have been categorized by the kind of stories they tell and the way they tell them. Broad categories include narrative, documentary, and experimental or *avant garde*. Documentaries are the most realistic, while experimental films are the purest expression of formalism. Narrative films occupy the middle ground. They may project an illusion of reality through their use of verisimilitude, but they are fictional stories. By the same token, they may employ formalistic techniques that call attention to the artificiality of the film world or veer away from the story into pure visual artistry. Nevertheless, narrative films are designed to convey fictional stories. Some of those stories share characteristics with each other, like siblings or cousins who share the same DNA. These are known as genre films.

From the early days of cinema, the term "genre" (already used to classify types of literature and visual art) was employed to describe different styles of narrative film. For example, *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) was one of the first attempts at cinematic storytelling and it drew heavily on Western novels popular at that time of its release. The Western, along with broad comedies featuring early masters such as Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, became the foundation for a rapidly growing body of distinct genre offerings that

would soon include crime, detective, war, horror, science fiction, and musical among others. Many of the conventions of the science fiction and horror genres were already apparent in the fantastical worlds created by George Méliès, while cinematic melodrama and conventions of the war movie surfaced in the early silent films of D. W. Griffith.

As the Hollywood studio system came to depend on an industrial mode of production, the genre film constituted a reliable product with predictable consumer demand. The conventions and iconography associated with genre films made it possible for the studios to produce them using a formula without significant alteration despite a changing cast of writers, directors, and actors. A film's genre was quickly apparent through its use of conventions associated with that genre, such as theme, setting, character types, story formulas, iconography, and visual style.

During the Classical Hollywood Period from the 1930s through the 1950s, genre films flourished. Filmmakers like Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford, and Howard Hawks embraced the art of genre storytelling and produced enduring genre masterpieces. In the 1960s and 1970s, a new generation of directors came to challenge and reinvent traditional genre tropes. For example, Sergio Leone's revisionist Westerns and George A. Romero's subversive horror films took advantage of genre storytelling to push back at cultural and social boundaries. In recent years, genre films have hybridized, with directors blending elements from multiple genres to yield unique offerings like *Cowboys and Aliens* (2011) and *Abraham Lincoln Vampire Killer* (2012).

Melodrama

Melodrama is drama on steroids. In a drama, a woman is faced with an unwanted pregnancy. In melodrama, the baby belongs to her sister's husband . . . who lost his memory in a car crash . . . and is now dying . . . in the same hospital where she is giving birth. If you have ever seen a daytime television soap opera (or reality show), you have witnessed melodrama. It works at the most primitive level of our emotions, evoking pity, anger, fear, and sorrow—often in quick succession.

The foundations of film melodrama were put in place during the silent era. D. W. Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* (1919) features star-crossed lovers, unjust suffering, and moral dilemmas—all of which went on to become common tropes of the genre. The use of close-ups and expressive acting techniques in F. W. Murnau's *Sunrise* (1927) reinforced the genre's storytelling power. During the 1930s, melodramas often featured lavish sets and glamorous stars that served as a welcome distraction from the brutality of daily life during the Great Depression. In the 1940s and 1950s, melodramas like *Now, Voyager* (1942) and *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) explored themes of love, sacrifice, and the triumph of the human spirit.

Melodrama's universal themes transcend national boundaries and find expression in the work of filmmakers around the world. Notable examples include Pedro Almodóvar in Spain, Yasujirō Ozu in Japan, and Rainer Werner Fassbinder in Germany. Other international filmmakers have pushed the genre in new directions. Wong Kar-wai's *Chungking Express* (1994) and *In the Mood for Love* (2000) pay homage to the classic elements of melodrama while reimaging the genre in new and wildly inventive ways.

Comedy

In every age and nation, comedy has played a role in entertainment and social commentary. The ancient Greeks had the plays of Aristophanes; the Italians had *commedia dell'arte*; Shakespeare made the Elizabethans laugh; and vaudeville supplied the first filmed comedy with actors like Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Harold Lloyd. Using physical comedy, visual gags, and slapstick routines, these early film comedians set the standard for contemporary physical comedians like Jim Carrey and Will Ferrell.

Lacking synchronized sound, the first films depended on exaggerated physicality, visual gags, and inventive storytelling to engage their audiences. Chaplin's films *The Kid* (1921) and *City Lights* (1931) present a masterful blend of melodrama and comedy that engages the viewer with both humor and pathos. Keaton's films, such as *The General* (1926), showcase daring physical feats and impeccable timing that established him as a comedic legend.

Impacted by the Great Depression and restrictions of the Hays Code, the 1930s gave birth to a subgenre dubbed "screwball" comedy featuring witty banter and complicated romantic entanglements. The Marx Brothers' rapid-fire delivery and zany antics took advantage of the new technology of synchronized sound in *Duck Soup* (1933), while films like *It Happened One Night* (1934) and *Bringing Up Baby* (1938) showcased the comedic talents of stars Clark Gable, Katherine Hepburn, and Cary Grant.

Contemporary filmmakers like the Farrelly brothers have pushed the boundaries of the comedy genre in new and transgressive directions with films like *Dumb and Dumber* (1994) and *There's Something About Mary* (1998).

Western

The Western is the only genre named after its setting. The mythos of the American West was prominent in the literary output of the late nineteenth century. Inspired by tales of life on the frontier, early filmmakers like Edwin Porter chose Western themes for some

of the first films. These early Westerns were short silent films featuring horse chases and gunfights. As the epicenter of motion picture production shifted to Southern California, filmmakers found an ideal backdrop for Western films.

The Western soon became the dominant genre in Hollywood. Directors like John Ford and Howard Hawks embraced the Western and created films with complex characters and psychological depth. Actors John Wayne, Gary Cooper, and James Stewart became synonymous with the genre, giving audiences rugged and moral heroes to admire.

Westerns such as Sergio Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) challenged traditional norms of heroism and morality and paved the way for modern revisionist Westerns like *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), Clint Eastwoods' *Unforgiven* (1992), and the Coen Brothers' *No Country for Old Men* (2007). While all these films are inspired by a central conflict between civilization and wilderness, the moral center has shifted over time. Today, a Western's villain may be at the head of a cavalry charge and the hero might be an outlaw or renegade.

Crime

When Harry, Albert, Sam, and Jack Warner founded Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. in 1923, they got off to a rocky start. Many of their early films struggled at the box office. Then, they hit on a winning formula: gritty crime dramas set in big cities, that appealed to a working-class audience. Prohibition (1920–1933) had outlawed the sale of alcohol in the United States and organized crime syndicates had taken over the alcohol trade. The dark and dangerous underworld of gangsters inspired Warner Brothers' films, which gave rise to charismatic antiheroes and explored themes of power, ambition, and the criminal lifestyle.

The 1930s and 1940s became a golden age for crime movies as filmmakers like Howard Hawks and Raoul Walsh channeled their creative talent into films such as *Scarface* (1932) and *White Heat* (1949). In the later part of the last century, Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* Trilogy (1972–1990) and Martin Scorcese's *Goodfellas* (1990) and *Casino* (1995) took a deep dive into the world of the Italian American Mafia.

As the crime genre has evolved, filmmakers have subverted traditional narratives while exploring a complex moral landscape in films like *Heat* (1995) and *The Departed* (2006). These films blur the line between protagonist and antagonist and challenge viewers to examine their own moral compass and question the nature of crime and justice. International directors like Jean-Pierre Melville with *Le Cercle Rouge* (1970) and Takeshi Kitano with *Sonatine* (1993) have infused the genre with fresh energy and ideas and push back against the classic crime genre formula of rags-to-riches-to-destruction.

Detective

The roots of the detective genre can be traced to the silent film era when early filmmakers used mystery in their narratives and employed crime-solving characters like Sherlock Holmes. However, it wasn't until the 1940s that the hardboiled crime fiction of authors Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett inspired filmmakers to create a darker, more cynical style of detective story that we commonly associate with the genre.

It was this era that gave us iconic characters like Sam Spade in the *Maltese Falcon* (1941) and Phillip Marlow in *The Big Sleep* (1946)—both played by Humphrey Bogart. The morally compromised protagonists of *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *The Big Heat* (1953) were entangled in webs of crime and deceit. These films, characterized by moody lighting, *femme fatales*, and morally ambiguous heroes, became the cornerstone of film noir—a subgenre that redefined detective cinema.

Internationally, the detective genre found expression in *Stray Dog* (1949), *High and Low* (1963), *Blow-Up* (1966), and *Le Samouraï* (1967), each of which added unique elements and perspectives to the genre, from social commentary to philosophical themes. As the genre has matured, filmmakers have continued to deconstruct its conventions. Films like *Chinatown* (1974) and *Se7en* (1995) lead audiences through intricate mazes of moral ambiguity that blur the line between victim, perpetrator, and observer.

Technology has also impacted the genre. *Zodiac* (2007) and *Gone Girl* (2014) showcase the use of cutting-edge forensic techniques, surveillance footage, and online resources that exceed the wildest imaginings of early filmmakers.

War

The war movie offers a window into the experience of soldiers, the politics of warfare, and the human cost of armed struggle. The genre has given us some of the most iconic and deeply moving films in cinema history. It has also served as a vehicle for government propaganda and has been used to drum up public support for military adventures and justify their price in blood and treasure.

The genre typically features soldiers as protagonists in a setting of armed conflict. It explores themes of courage and sacrifice and often features elaborate battle sequences. The iconography of war movies is defined by the weapons, uniforms, and equipment used by the soldiers: from helmets and gas masks to helicopters and night vision goggles. Flags, military insignia, and patriotic music are commonly used to evoke a martial spirit. From the trenches of World War I to the jungles of Vietnam and the deserts of the Middle

East, the setting is often used to show the physical and emotional strains of combat, as well as the impact and upheaval visited upon the civilian population.

War movies typically utilize a realistic approach to visual storytelling. Like crime and detective films, they rely on realism to place the audience close to the action. Common story formulas involve taking a location (e.g., Hamburger Hill) or defending a location (e.g., Do Lung Bridge). Warner Brothers' films such as *The Great Escape* (1963), *The Dirty Dozen* (1967), and *Where Eagles Dare* (1968) established many of the conventions of the genre.

A more recent entry in the genre is Katherine Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker* (2008), which employs a powerfully realistic approach to place the audience amid the action. In one of the most harrowing scenes, a squad of elite American soldiers is pinned down in a desert ambush. Hours pass as they face off against the enemy under a scorching sun. We watch in close-up as sweat soaks through their fatigues. Flies buzz around their bloodshot eyes. Wind-blown dust gathers on their skin and hair. Their thirst and exhaustion become palpable. The power of film realism puts us there with them in the barren desert under fire.

Horror

Horror films explore our fears around death, disease, and insanity. No other genre connects with audiences on such a primal level. From chilling suspense to monsters and gore, horror films tap into our deepest fears and explore the darkest corners of the human psyche. They take advantage of our fascination with the unknown and reflect prevailing societal and cultural anxieties.

Many of George Méliès' early narrative experiments took their ideas from Gothic literature and incorporated demons, ghosts, and vampires. German Expressionist classics *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and *Nosferatu* (1922) pioneered the cinematic exploration of horror themes. In Hollywood, Universal Studios gained a reputation for producing horror films, including *Frankenstein* (1931), *Dracula* (1931), and *The Mummy* (1932).

Horror films use lighting and color to create a mood that enhances suspense. Dark shadows create foreboding and creepy music and sound effects add to the ominous tone. The visual iconography and use of unsettling camera angles (e.g., the oblique or Dutch angle) are designed to create feelings of unease in the viewer. Many horror films follow a narrative structure that builds tension and suspense through a series of escalating scares until a final climax resolves the story.

The horror genre has gone through an evolution over the course of a century of cinema and has spun off multiple subgenres, from psychological horror to slasher movies and

splatter porn. Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) was filmed in black and white because the director was worried that the blood would be too shocking to audiences if seen in color. Twenty years later, films like *Halloween* (1978) and *Friday the 13th* (1980) revelled in the gore.

Science Fiction

Science fiction has come a long way since Georges Méliès' *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) imagined space travel and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) envisioned a future dystopia where the wealthy enjoy a life of pleasure while the poor labor underground as slaves. Still, the dominant theme of the genre remains our fear of technology and what it might bring.

Characterized by the exploration of scientific and technological advances, science fiction films question the price those advances exact on our humanity. In turbulent and confusing times, they often serve as an allegory or cautionary tale. For example, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) can both be read as metaphors for Cold War paranoia and fear of communist infiltration.

Films like *Blade Runner* (1982), *District 9* (2009), and *Black Panther* (2018) have broadened the genre's scope and use science fiction narrative as a vehicle to present fresh perspectives on modern culture and society.

Musicals

The only music in the first decades of film came from a piano or orchestra pit next to the screen. The musical arrived with the advent of synchronized sound. Early sound pictures like *The Jazz Singer* (1927) and *The Broadway Melody* (1929) paved the way for the integration of music and performance in motion pictures.

Musicals present a unique combination of narrative, music, dance, and spectacle. Song and dance sequences serve to advance the plot, allow characters to express hidden emotions, and provide memorable moments in the narrative. Elaborate production design and intricately choreographed dance sequences are hallmarks of the genre. Utilizing ornate sets and extravagant costumes, the musical genre creates a mood of theatricality and escapism that allows the audience to suspend disbelief and immerse themselves in a world where anything is possible.

Musicals had their Golden Age during the middle of the last century with iconic films like *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964), and *The Sound of*

Music (1965) but has seen a recent resurgence with *Across the Universe* (2007), *La La Land* (2016), and *The Greatest Showman* (2017).

Ridley Scott: A Case Study in Genre Filmmaking

Ridley Scott is one of the most celebrated and influential filmmakers of our time, known for visually stunning and thematically rich genre films. In a career spanning half a century, he has directed virtually every genre category. Scott's films push the boundaries of genre conventions while reflecting a nuanced understanding of the cultural zeitgeist of his time.

In the science fiction genre, Scott's films are renowned for intricate world-building and visionary design. His dystopian urban landscapes in *Blade Runner* (1982) have become a cultural touchstone. At the same time, Scott's science fiction films transcend the limitations of the genre and delve into existential and philosophical themes.

Scott's detective films reimagine film noir for contemporary audiences. For example, in *The Counselor* (2013), Scott uses lighting, mise-en-scène, and color to take the viewer on a journey through society's dark underbelly while exploring themes of identity, morality, and corruption.

The horror films of Ridley Scott are iconic representatives of the genre, tapping into our primal fear of the unknown and our vulnerability in the face of forces beyond our understanding. In *Alien* (1979), his masterful manipulation of atmosphere, tension, and pacing leaves the audience with a palpable sense of dread that culminates in a cathartic release in the final moments of the film.

In the war film *Black Hawk Down* (2001), Scott focuses on the chaos, heroism, and moral dilemmas faced in the midst of mortal combat. His attention to detail and historical accuracy contribute to a visceral and immersive experience that supports a powerful exploration of themes of sacrifice, honor, and the blurred lines between good and evil.

Scott's films in the crime genre, such as *American Gangster* (2007), delve into the gritty and morally ambiguous criminal underworld. In these films, he explores the complex dynamics between criminals, law enforcement, and the justice system. His attention to character development and atmospheric storytelling elevates the genre.

The first and final films in Scott's filmography are historical epics. In these and other films like *Gladiator* (2000) and *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005), Scott explores the intersection of myth and history, deftly crafting sweeping historical narratives that resonate with the modern world.

Watching Ridley Scott's films is like taking a masterclass in genre filmmaking. Each film conveys a complex set of themes in a way uniquely suited to the film's genre.

The director's iconic visual style and meticulous attention to detail deliver a powerful viewing experience and his innovative interpretation of genre conventions has left a lasting mark on the cinematic landscape.

Ridley Scott Filmography

The Duellists (1977)—Historical Epic
Alien (1979)—Science Fiction/Horror
Blade Runner (1982)—Science Fiction/Detective
Legend (1985)—Fantasy
Someone to Watch Over Me (1987)—Thriller
Black Rain (1989)—Crime
Thelma & Louise (1991)—Road Movie
1492: Conquest of Paradise (1992)—Adventure
White Squall (1996)—Disaster/Survival
G.I. Jane (1997)—Action/Drama
Gladiator (2000)—Historical Drama
Hannibal (2001)—Horror
Black Hawk Down (2001)—War
Matchstick Men (2003)—Comedy
Kingdom of Heaven (2005)—Historical Drama
A Good Year (2006)—Romantic Comedy
American Gangster (2007)—Crime
Body of Lies (2008)—Thriller
Robin Hood (2010)—Action
Prometheus (2012)—Science Fiction
The Counselor (2013)—Thriller
Exodus: Gods and Kings (2014)—Historical Epic
The Martian (2015)—Science Fiction
Alien: Covenant (2017)—Science Fiction/Horror
All the Money in the World (2017)—Thriller
The Last Duel (2021)—Historical Drama
House of Gucci (2021)—Crime
Napoleon (2023)—Historical Epic

15 | AUTHOR

Screenwriter • Director • Editor

"A film is never really good unless the camera is an eye in the head of a poet."

—Orson Welles

Movies are made three times: first by a screenwriter sitting alone in a room with an empty page, second by a director holding a script and issuing orders to an army of artists and technicians, and finally by an editor sitting alone in a room with hundreds of hours of footage. Each of these collaborators plays a unique and vital role in the creation of a motion picture.

In a very real sense, the screenwriter is the first author of a movie. They create the blueprint that the director and other creative personnel will use to bring the story to life on screen. The screenwriter has the daunting task of taking the kernel of an idea and developing it into a complete story with fully realized characters and a compelling plot. Once the screenplay is complete, it serves as the road map for the entire production. The writer's voice sets the tone for the film, and their words become the foundation for the final product.

The director is responsible for translating that screenplay into a visual and emotional experience for the audience. They often work with the writer to understand the nuances of the story and then make decisions about the look, tone, and pacing of the film. The director must also oversee the cast and crew and make decisions about everything from camera angles to the overall visual style of the movie. It is the director's job to take the words on the page and turn them into a living, breathing world on screen.

The editor is the final author of a movie, responsible for taking all the footage shot by the director and using it to create a coherent, compelling story. The editor works closely with the director to understand their vision for the film, while also making choices about pacing, tone, and structure. They must also be able to work independently, shaping the footage into something that transcends the limitations of the script and the film shoot. The editor is the final arbiter of the film's narrative, and their choices can make or break the final product.

Collaboration

While the spheres of influence of the screenwriter, director, and editor are distinct, they are also interconnected. The director may make changes to the screenplay to better align the film with a chosen theme and an editor may omit entire scenes that fail to advance the plot or deepen our understanding of the characters. Ultimately, the success of the motion picture depends on the ability of the screenwriter, director, and editor to work together to create a cohesive and engaging final product.

Each member of this troika possesses a set of skills and perspectives, which are essential to bringing the film to life. In the preproduction stage, the screenwriter must be willing to make changes and revisions to the script based on feedback from the director. During production, the director must be open to new ideas and anticipate the needs of the editor. In postproduction, the editor must be able to work closely with the director, understanding their ideas while making sure the final cut stands on its own merits as a work of art.

In practice, the level of cooperation between these three collaborators varies widely depending on the specific production and the individuals involved. In many cases, the screenwriter has limited involvement once production begins. The director may significantly alter the script during production, and the screenwriter may not be consulted. In some cases, the director will work closely with the editor to shape the final film. In other cases, the director may provide the editor with more autonomy, allowing them to make creative decisions without significant input. A film's producers and studio also impact the level of interaction and cooperation between director and editor.

Screenwriting

A screenplay is the cornerstone of a film, and the screenwriter's job is to create a story that is compelling, engaging, and visually interesting. The screenwriter must be able to translate their ideas into a visual medium and create a script that can be easily understood

by their collaborators. To this end, screenplays are written in a standardized format and include elements such as slug lines (scene headings), action, description, narration, character names, and dialogue. The format is designed to make the script easy to read and understand for actors, directors, producers, and members of the production team. Professional screenplay format is designed to be read vertically, like the frames of a movie passing in front of a projector, rather than horizontally like a novel.

Other elements, such as scene numbers, notes on camera angles, lighting, and sound effects, are typically added before production in a version of the screenplay known as the "shooting script." These notes provide additional information to the production team about how the screenplay should be translated into a visual medium.

Sometimes a writer will create a screenplay based on an original idea. A completed original screenplay, referred to as a "spec" (short for speculative screenplay) makes big news if it sells, but this type of script makes up a very small portion of movies that are ultimately given the green light to be produced.

Spec scripts took on a mythic quality during the early 1990s. A strike called by the Writers Guild of America was followed by an urgent demand for content. This resulted in spec scripts selling for millions—many of which were never made. During this period, the William Morris Agency sparked a trend of putting speculative scripts on the auction block with a limited bidding window. This strategy triggered bidding wars between major studios. In a single year (1990), fourteen scripts sold for over a million dollars. The screenplays *Milk Money* ($1 million), *Radio Flyer* ($1.25 million), *Medicine Man* ($3 million), *Basic Instinct* ($3 million), and *The Long Kiss Goodnight* ($4 million) were produced with varying degrees of box office success. Many others that sold for six figures still languish in development hell.

Screenplays can be developed from a literary property, franchise, or concept proposed by a producer. Other sources of material include articles, bestselling novels, plays, remakes of older films, real-life stories, video games, fairy tales, comic books, graphic novels, and sequels to successful films. A writer may team up with a producer to pitch their take on a concept generated by studio executives. If they succeed in selling their approach to the movie, they begin work on the screenplay.

For those fortunate few screenplays that survive the development process and receive a green light for production, the next phase of preproduction involves casting actors, scouting locations, and designing sets and costumes. At this stage, the director takes over. Part of their job is to interpret the screenplay. This may involve collaborating with the screenwriter to craft a shared vision for the film. The focus at this stage is on character development, pacing, and visual storytelling to ensure that the story is realized in a compelling way.

The quality of the screenplay will have a major impact on the final film. A well-written script makes the director's and editor's jobs easier, providing a clear road map for how the

film should be shot and cut. Conversely, a poorly conceived script can make a director's job much more difficult and limit the editor's ability to create a compelling film.

Oscar-winning screenwriter William Goldman's book *Adventures in the Screen Trade* explores the role of the screenwriter through a series of essays based on his experience working on a variety of successful (and unsuccessful) films including *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), *The Princess Bride* (1973), and *All the President's Men* (1976). He discusses the mechanics of screenwriting as well as the challenges of working with studio executives, directors, and stars.

Several notable films explore the screenwriter's role in the film production process. They do not paint a pretty picture. *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) is a classic film noir that offers a cynical portrayal of the film industry and the life of a struggling screenwriter. The story revolves around Joe Gillis (played by William Holden), a screenwriter who becomes entangled with a faded silent film star named Norma Desmond (played by Gloria Swanson). As Joe becomes trapped in Norma's delusions of a comeback, the film reveals the dark side of Hollywood, the sacrifices made in pursuit of success, and the blurred boundaries between reality and illusion. *Barton Fink* (1991) delves into the struggles of a screenwriter trying to maintain artistic integrity in the face of the commercial demands of a fictional Hollywood studio. The film follows Barton Fink (played by John Turturro), a celebrated New York playwright who is hired to write a wrestling screenplay in Hollywood. As Fink battles with writer's block and finds himself immersed in a bizarre and nightmarish world, the film takes on themes of creativity, isolation, and the compromises artists often face in the industry. In *The Player* (1992), a Hollywood executive becomes the subject of a murder investigation as he tries to navigate the treacherous world of deal-making and script development. The film provides a scathing critique of the industry's superficiality, backstabbing culture, and the often soul-crushing compromises made by those seeking success. *Adaptation* (2002) examines the process of screenwriting itself. The story follows Charlie Kaufman (played by Nicolas Cage), a struggling screenwriter who is tasked with adapting a nonfiction book into a screenplay. The film cleverly blurs the lines between reality and fiction, as Kaufman becomes consumed by his writing struggles and personal insecurities.

Preproduction

Unlike a screenwriter, who can toil alone with a few simple tools, a director must assemble a team of professionals to bring their vision to life. This army of people includes actors, cinematographer, editor, sound designer, and many others, all of whom play a critical role in the production process.

In preproduction, every step of creating the film is carefully designed and planned. A production company is created, and a production office is established. The film is previsualized by the director and may be storyboarded with the help of illustrators and concept artists. Insurance is procured to protect against accidents. Locations are finalized, major and minor roles are cast, and a detailed shooting schedule is produced. A line manager or production manager is charged with producing the schedule along with generating an overall budget for the film.

The director is responsible for bringing the script to life. They translate the words on each page of the screenplay into visual images and work closely with the actors to bring out the best performance possible. Their primary job is to answer a thousand questions a day: "What model of Chevrolet is she driving?" "Convertible or hardtop?" "Red, green, or yellow?" "Automatic or standard transmission?" They work closely with the cinematographer and production designer in preproduction to establish the overall look of the film.

In addition to assembling a team, the director must identify a clear and compelling theme. This underlying theme becomes a unifying force for the project and provides direction and purpose to the creative team. Once the theme is determined, the filmmaker works with the cast and crew to weave it through every scene of the film. This involves countless decisions regarding set design and composition, camera angles, lighting, and sound.

The director's skills as a communicator and collaborator are put to the test as they work with their team to ensure that everyone is on the same page and works toward the same goals. Like a military general leading their forces into battle, the director must be a skilled strategist, able to make decisions quickly in response to changing circumstances. In the heat of production, most of these decisions will occur at an unconscious level based on gut instinct.

The director's choices regarding camera angles, lighting, performance, and pacing will have a profound impact on how the film will be received. In the current Hollywood motion picture production system, the director's role is more important than ever. With increasing pressure to produce blockbuster hits and appeal to international audiences, directors must be skilled at creating visually stunning films with compelling narratives that resonate with viewers—all while staying on schedule and under budget.

To get a feel for the director's experience, there are several excellent books available. Sidney Lumet's *Making Movies* details his day-to-day experience directing films such as *12 Angry Men* (1957), *Network* (1976), and *The Verdict* (1982). *On Directing Film* by David Mamet explains his approach to directing through a series of lectures given at Columbia University. Laurent Tirard's *Moviemaker's Master Class* contains interviews with twenty of the world's foremost directors that reveal some of the ideas, tricks, strategies, and secrets that have contributed to their success.

Preproduction is also the subject of numerous films, including *Living in Oblivion* (1995) which takes a behind-the-scenes look at the chaotic preparations for an independent production. The film follows director Nick Reve (played by Steve Buscemi) as he tries to navigate a series of mishaps, conflicts, and technical difficulties in pursuit of his artistic vision. *Get Shorty* (1995) follows Chili Palmer (played by John Travolta), a Miami loan shark who travels to Hollywood and becomes involved in the film industry, leveraging his criminal expertise to navigate the complex web of preproduction challenges. *Bowfinger* (1999) centers on Bobby Bowfinger (played by Steve Martin), a struggling filmmaker who hatches a scheme to make a movie with a famous action star without the actor's knowledge. David Mamet's *State and Main* (2000) follows a Hollywood film crew as they descend upon a small New England town and encounter a series of obstacles. The film delves into the compromises, ethical dilemmas, and behind-the-scenes chaos that often occur during preproduction.

Production

During production, budget and schedule become critical concerns. Additional crew including a property master, script supervisor, assistant directors, stills photographer, and picture and sound editors are brought in. Costs skyrocket. The pressure on the director is to complete the production phase as rapidly as possible.

Some directors are notorious for having actors perform an endless number of takes of the same scene. Stanley Kubrick was a perfectionist known to demand scores of takes for a single line of dialogue. A scene in *The Shining* (1980) with actress Shelley Duvall was shot 127 times. In his final film, *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), Kubrick shot a million feet of film over the course of fifteen months. Other directors like Clint Eastwood have a reputation of working quickly and efficiently, nailing each shot in one or two takes. Still others like M. Night Shyamalan will eschew coverage altogether and only film the scene from the angle they intend to use in the edit.

At the end of each day's work, the director and producer gather the department heads and review the dailies produced that day. In the days of photochemical film, this process was fraught with uncertainty because the footage was being reviewed for the first time. The advent of digital production tools has eliminated much of this stress because the director and department heads are able to see the images in real time as they are recorded.

Workdays on an active film set often last eighteen hours and require cast and crew to travel or remain in a remote location. Scheduling of key cast members is critical,

with bankable stars often scheduled in narrow windows of time. The director is generally physically present on set during the production phase, often working for weeks at a time without a break. It is no wonder that most directors are relieved to hand off their footage to a trusted editor when the film wraps, so they can take a break to rest and recover.

A few motion pictures have transcended the boundaries of traditional storytelling and made themselves the subject of their own narrative. Known as "meta" films, they offer a unique lens through which we can view film production. Fellini's *8 1/2* (1963) is a classic meta film that delves into the creative struggles and introspection of a filmmaker. The story revolves around Guido Anselmi (played by Marcello Mastroianni), a renowned film director who finds himself in a creative crisis while trying to realize his next project. The film challenges conventional structures and offers a layered and contemplative exploration of the director's experience. French New Wave director François Truffaut's *Day for Night* (1973) delves into the behind-the-scenes chaos of moviemaking. The director (played by Truffaut himself) faces challenges such as temperamental actors, diva behavior, technical difficulties, budget constraints, and romantic entanglements among the crew. Truffaut cleverly juxtaposes the chaos of the set with the final product on the screen. The film-within-a-film explores various genres, including drama, comedy, and romance, offering glimpses into the intricate artistry involved in making a film.

Postproduction

The postproduction phase consists of editing footage shot during production, adding visual effects, and mixing dialogue, sound effects, and music. The editor essentially creates the film for a third time, using what they receive from the production team.

Editing is both technical and creative. The editor must be able to work with a wide range of software and equipment to manipulate the footage and create desired effects. They have to work quickly and efficiently under tight production deadlines as they take the raw footage captured during production and transform it into a coherent and compelling story that accurately represents the director's vision for the film.

In postproduction, the editor reviews footage (either with or without the director) and determines the best way to tell the story. This involves selecting the best takes, deciding on the pacing and flow of scenes, and structuring the film in a way that creates a satisfying narrative.

A good editor is skilled at visual storytelling, using cuts, transitions, and other editing techniques to create a cinematic experience that engages the audience and conveys the emotions and themes of the film. They are also responsible for ensuring that the technical

aspects of the film—color correction, sound mixing, and special effects—are applied in a way that is visually and aurally satisfying.

In his book *In the Blink of an Eye: Perspectives on Film Editing*, legendary film editor and sound designer Walter Murch shares his thoughts on editing and his experiences editing masterpieces *The Godfather* (1972) and *Apocalypse Now* (1979). Along the way, he covers concepts such as rhythm, pacing, and the psychological impact of the cut.

Several films take on the world of postproduction. Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974) focuses on a surveillance expert and audio technician who is hired to record and analyze a conversation, which leads him down a path of paranoia and moral dilemma. *Blow Out* (1981) tells the story of a film sound editor who discovers that he has captured audio evidence of a political conspiracy. As he delves deeper into the recording, he becomes embroiled in a dangerous web of deceit. *Boogie Nights* (1997) offers glimpses into the postproduction process of editing adult films, showcasing the technical aspects and the creative decisions involved in shaping the final product. Finally, *Pleasantville* (1998) explores the transformative power of film and the art of editing. The story follows two modern-day teenagers who are transported into a black-and-white 1950s sitcom world. As the characters in the sitcom start experiencing emotions and change, color gradually seeps into their world.

Cinematic Trinity

In the end, the screenwriter, director, and editor are the trinity of cinematic storytelling. The screenwriter's words serve as the foundation, the director brings the story to life, and the editor weaves the narrative together in postproduction. Together, they shape the film and collaborate to create a captivating cinematic experience that resonates with audiences. Understanding the roles of these key players in the filmmaking process provides a deeper appreciation for the artistry and craftsmanship involved in bringing stories to the screen. Their contributions, both individually and collectively, make filmmaking a collaborative and transformative medium, where imagination, vision, and technical expertise combine to create enduring works of art.

16 | PLAYER

Casting • Character • Collaboration

"Acting is the art of living truthfully under imaginary circumstances."

—Sanford Meisner

On the southern slope of the Acropolis in Athens are the ruins of the Theatre of Dionysus. Dating back to the fifth century BCE, this amphitheater once held audiences of 17,000 spectators for theatrical performances. In tragedies and comedies performed on stage, Greek actors pioneered dramatic storytelling and entertainment using masks to represent a cast of characters and spectrum of emotions.

Masks have been used in dramatic traditions around the world for millennia. Beginning in religious and ceremonial contexts, the masked actor was believed to possess the power of whichever god or spirit they represented. In Japanese Noh theater, masks are used to represent the emotions and inner states of the characters in much the same way that the German Expressionists used costumes and makeup. In the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, characters are represented by masks associated with specific personality traits or social roles.

In medieval Europe, acting (like most art) was focused on sacred themes. Mystery and miracle plays were performed in churches to convey religious narratives to a largely illiterate population. During the Renaissance, acting in Europe became a distinct art form practiced by professional theater companies. By the seventeenth century, the profession had attained a new level of popularity and respect thanks in large part to the work of playwrights like William Shakespeare. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the

actor's art continued to evolve. However, it was not until the advent of film and television during the last century that an entirely new approach to the art form was born: acting for the camera.

In contrast to the stage actor, who uses exaggerated physical gestures, makeup, facial expressions, and vocal projection to reach the nosebleed seats at the back of the house, the film actor has a close and intimate connection to the audience through the camera lens that captures every nuance of their facial expression and body language. This is illustrated to great comic effect in Damien Chazelle's *Babylon* (2022) when Nellie LaRoy (Margot Robbie) emerges from the makeup tent for her first film role. Unaware of the requirements of the new medium, she appears on set wearing the absurdly exaggerated makeup of a vaudeville performer.

When acting for the camera, an actor must be constantly mindful of their positioning, facial expression, and vocal inflection because the camera will capture nuances that might not be visible to a live audience. A subtle eye movement or a twitch of the mouth can carry tremendous dramatic weight. Since the performance is recorded by the camera down to the finest detail, it must be both authentic and compelling. The development of high-definition digital cameras has put even greater pressure on actors because the new technology is capable of capturing images in far greater detail than the 35mm film cameras that were standard for the first century of motion picture history.

Camera, Lighting, and Performance

The film actor must understand and work with different camera angles and shot types. For example, a low-angle shot can make an actor appear larger and more powerful, while a high-angle shot can make them appear small and weak. If they are being filmed in close-up, the actor must modulate their performance for subtlety and nuance. On the other hand, if they are being filmed in a wide shot, their performance must consider the larger context and overall composition within the frame.

Lighting is a critical element in acting for the camera. Actors must be constantly aware of their positioning relative to the lights and the camera, as well as understand how different lighting setups can affect the mood and tone of a scene. For example, low-key lighting can evoke mystery or tension, whereas high-key lighting generates a more upbeat or cheerful mood. As such, actors must be able to adapt their performances to suit different lighting setups and understand how they can use lighting to enhance their performance.

Perhaps the most important technique in acting for the camera is the ability to convey authenticity and emotional depth. Unlike on stage, where an actor's performance is projected to a large audience, an actor's performance on camera is captured in close detail and

must come across as genuine and authentic if it is to be believed. Actors must tap into their emotional range and convey subtle emotions and expressions in a way that is credible to the audience. A key technique in acting for the camera is control of one's movements and expressions. Since the camera picks up even the slightest movement, actors must learn to be still and focused when delivering their lines. This means paying attention to every detail of motion, facial expression, and body language. The actor must be constantly aware of their blocking, which is the predetermined movement of the camera and actors. They need to be able to work within these parameters while smoothly delivering their lines and actions.

Camera acting demands that the actor is fully present in the moment, responding authentically to other actors and the environment. This means staying present and engaged in character even when not delivering lines, to ensure that their reactions are genuine and believable. They must be able to maintain this focus despite the distractions of the set, crew, and equipment. It's essential that the film actor is able to take direction and work collaboratively with the director and crew to create a cohesive and effective performance. At the same time, they must be willing to take risks, try new approaches, and adapt to changes on set to achieve the desired outcome.

Method Acting

Method acting is a technique that originated in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. It is also known as the "Stanislavski System," "Method Acting," or simply "The Method." It was named after the Russian actor and director Constantin Stanislavski, who developed a similar approach in the early twentieth century. The theory behind method acting is that an actor must develop an emotional and psychological connection with the character they are playing in order to portray them realistically and convincingly. This involves immersing themself in the character's backstory, motivations, and emotions, and using personal experiences and memories to bring the character to life.

In practice, method acting can incorporate a variety of techniques, including sense memory, emotional recall, and physical transformation. Sense memory involves using sensory details, such as smells, sounds, and textures, to recall past experiences and emotions that can be used to enhance performance. Emotional recall uses personal memories of past experiences to access and express a specific emotion on camera. Physical transformation involves altering one's appearance or mannerisms to better embody a character, such as gaining or losing weight, adopting a different accent, or changing one's gait.

Method acting has been used by many famous actors, including Marlon Brando, Robert De Niro, and Meryl Streep, and has been credited with producing some of the most

powerful and memorable performances in film history. However, it has also been criticized for being potentially traumatic for the actor. Some argue that the emotional and psychological immersion required for method acting can lead to a loss of self-awareness and a blurring of the line between the actor and their character. Physical transformations undertaken in method acting can even be dangerous and lead to long-term physical or mental health problems.

Examples abound of actors going to extreme lengths to fully inhabit their characters. Jim Carrey remained in character as the entertainer Andy Kaufmann for the entire production period of *Man on the Moon* (1999). Robert De Niro gained fifty pounds for his role as boxer Jake LaMotta in *Raging Bull* (1980) and Christian Bale lost an even greater amount for his role in *The Machinist* (2004). The death of Heath Ledger of a drug overdose came weeks after completing an intense performance as the evil Joker in *The Dark Knight* (2008).

Other Influences

Every aspect of film form impacts a film actor's performance. The structure of the narrative (when and where the actor's scene takes place) can alter the pacing and impact of their performance. The mise-en-scène (where the actor is placed in relation to the camera and the other actors) has a profound impact on their screen presence. Cinematography (how the actor is lit by the cinematographer) can radically alter their appearance. Marilyn Monroe is known to have been very particular about her lighting on set. Her contracts famously included a clause giving her approval over lighting and camera angles used in her scenes. Sound (the quality of the dialogue recording and how it is mixed with other sound elements) can highlight or bury an actor's lines. Finally, the editor can enhance an actor's performance by selecting the most powerful take or cut them out of the film altogether.

Director

The actor works closely with the director in creating their performance. The director is usually involved in the casting process and selects actors they believe are best suited for roles in their film. They may hold rehearsals with the actors to work on character development, blocking, and delivery of lines. This is valuable time for the director to build a rapport with the actors and for the actors to gain a deeper understanding of their characters. During filming, the director will work closely with the actors to ensure that their performances are

consistent with the vision of the film. The director may give the actors direction on how to deliver their lines, adjust their physicality or blocking, or help them to connect emotionally with their characters. The director will also provide feedback to actors after each take, telling them what worked and what didn't, and making suggestions for adjustments in the next take.

Cinematographer

The cinematographer can impact performance in a variety of ways. The way that an actor is lit can change the mood or tone of a scene and can also influence the way that the actor is perceived by the audience. For example, harsh lighting can create a sense of tension or conflict, while soft lighting can create a more romantic or intimate atmosphere. The cinematographer has control over the camera's position and angle, which can affect the way that the audience sees and interprets the actor's performance. Camera movement can also impact an actor's performance. For example, a handheld camera can create a sense of immediacy and energy, while a static shot can create a more formal or composed mood. The way that the camera moves can draw attention to certain aspects of the actor's performance, such as their facial expressions or physical movements. The framing of a shot can also affect an actor's performance. For example, a close-up shot can emphasize an actor's emotional state, while a wide shot can place them in the context of their surroundings. The cinematographer can use framing to highlight certain aspects of the actor's performance or to create a specific mood or tone.

Editor

The film editor plays a critical role in shaping a motion picture actor's performance. They are the one who decides which take of an actor's performance will make it into the final cut of the film. The editor's choice of takes has a powerful effect on the overall quality and impact of the performance. They shape the pacing of each scene of the film through their use of cuts and transitions. By cutting between shots at a certain speed or rhythm, the editor can build tension, energy, or emotion that enhances or detracts from an actor's performance.

The editor can also shape an actor's performance by selecting shots that highlight certain emotions, reactions, or expressions. By juxtaposing different shots or scenes, the editor provides context for the performance that can contribute to a nuanced and complex portrayal of the character. They can also elevate an actor's performance using editing

techniques such as slow motion, cross-cutting, or montage. Finally, the editor can help to correct mistakes or flaws. For example, if an actor stumbles over their lines or makes a mistake in a physical performance, the editor can use different takes or editing techniques to smooth over the error and create a seamless performance.

On the other hand, the motion picture editor can reduce an actor's presence in the film or eliminate their character altogether. A young actor recently attended a major motion picture premiere at the Fox Theater in Los Angeles. Stars walked the red carpet and xenon searchlights crisscrossed the sky overhead. The actor had just earned his Screen Actors Guild card by playing a secondary role in the film. He invited his family and friends to share in his moment of glory. Sitting near the front with his companions, he chatted excitedly as the lights went down and the titles rolled. "Here comes my scene," he whispered ten minutes into the film. The scene ended abruptly with a slam cut to a parallel storyline. With barely concealed despair, he acknowledged that his part in the scene was no longer in the film. It turns out that none of his scenes survived the edit—his character no longer existed in the story. Why? The editor discovered that his character was not essential to advance the plot or deepen our understanding of the main characters. By eliminating several unnecessary scenes, he was able to cut ten minutes off the running time of the movie and improve the overall pacing.

Business of Acting

The director David Lynch is a Hollywood iconoclast who has written and directed some of the most striking and idiosyncratic work in film history. In his surrealist neo-noir *Mulholland Drive* (2001), he presents a complex and disturbing portrait of casting, character, and direction for a fictional movie-within-a-movie called *The Sylvia North Story*. When aspiring actress Betty (Naomi Watts) arrives in Hollywood, she is naive and hopelessly earnest in her ambition to act in the movies. Her interaction with casting agents, directors, producers, and executives serves as a scathing critique of an industry that often treats actors like cattle (Hitchcock) or emotion-producing machines (Kubrick).

Lynch is not alone; films about screen actors and acting abound, from *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) and *Singing in the Rain* (1952) to *Body Double* (1984) and *Babylon* (2023). Stardom and tragedy have been linked in the public imagination from the very beginning of the film industry. In 1932, Peg Entwistle was the most famous actress in Hollywood for a short stint. When the roles stopped coming her way, she made headlines by ending her floundering career by leaping to her death from the "H" in the Hollywood sign.

Another Lynch film *Blue Velvet* (1986) provides a perfect illustration of the impact of camera, lighting, mise-en-scène, sound, and editing on an actor's performance. There is a pivotal scene in which Laura Dern's character, Sandy, discovers that her boyfriend, Jeffery, has been cheating on her. The scene is a masterclass in cinematic storytelling and an elegant illustration of the powerful synthesis of acting with other formal cinematic elements. Using close-ups, lighting, and sound, Lynch creates profound unease and tension that reflects Sandy's inner turmoil and confusion, and the scene powerfully shows how cinema can convey complex emotions and experiences.

It takes place in a suburban living room. The grandfather clock, cream-colored walls, and velvet furniture form a powerful counterpoint to the drama of the scene as Jeffrey leads a naked and brutalized Dorothy into the room. Sandy frantically calls for her mother. As Dorothy clings to Jeffrey, Sandy notices their connection and becomes increasingly agitated. Her mother enters the low-ceilinged room with its carefully framed prints of mediocre art. She's dressed in a shapeless brown bathrobe and shows no reaction to finding a naked and bloody woman in her living room.

Dorothy repeats Jeffery's name and begs him to hold her. The camera finds Sandy's reaction. Behind her, in deep focus, is a white mantle covered in tacky decorations. The high-key lighting illuminates her flowing blond curls and childish floral print dress. As Sandy's mother returns from calling an ambulance, Dorothy calls Jeffery her "secret love" and stares deeply into his eyes. "I love you. Love me!" she screams, then turns to Dorothy and proclaims, "He put his disease in me."

Sandy's face falls, and her emotions are conveyed through a series of close-ups. The camera lingers on her stunned look, her tears, and her pained features. The use of close-ups in this scene is particularly effective in conveying Sandy's emotional state, as it allows the viewer to see the subtle changes in her facial expression and the rawness of her pain. Her face becomes a dramatic mask telegraphing her emotional state.

The lighting in the scene adds to the dramatic impact of the performance. The room is bathed in a warm and comforting golden glow that serves as a counterpoint to Sandy's emotional turmoil. This contrast creates tension as it highlights the gulf between Sandy's external world and her inner emotional crisis.

As Sandy's mother produces a coat to cover Dorothy's naked body, the sound of a siren outside grows louder, creating a feeling of disorientation and chaos. The sound design emphasizes the rupture that has occurred in Sandy's relationship and her world. It can be seen as a symbolic scream of pain in response to Jeffery's betrayal and the sudden upheaval in her predictable and orderly life.

17 | Last Looks

Lights Camera Action

"Filmmaking is the ultimate team sport."

—Michael Keaton

"Last looks" is a term used during a motion picture shoot for final adjustments before the cameras roll. It's the last chance for the crew to fix an actor's hair disheveled during a costume change, correct smudged makeup, and check the set for continuity with the last shot. Under intense time pressure, the crew must work with speed and precision while keeping the actor comfortable and relaxed. Last looks showcases the skill and professionalism of hair stylists, makeup artists, and set costumers who work behind the scenes to assure that the shoot runs smoothly. They are one small unit within a vast army of professionals in a film production.

Filmmaking is an inherently collaborative act. A major motion picture requires the collaboration of hundreds, sometimes thousands, of individuals with a variety of skills and expertise. No individual works alone; the creative input that each member of the team brings to the task is applied and modified by others. A well-crafted film seamlessly integrates the diverse contributions of all these collaborators in a way the audience perceives as organic to the story. In other words, we don't notice them at all.

To fully appreciate a film's artistry, it helps to remember that everything we see on screen had to be constructed or brought to the set. From the bicycle in the driveway to the fountain pen in an actor's pocket; the placemat on the kitchen table and the wind chime

outside the window; the house itself and the trees around it—the entire world of the story is a work of art created by a vast team of artisans.

At the conclusion of a film screening, as the lights come up and the audience begins filing out, a credit roll appears on the screen to acknowledge the contribution of each of these crew members. Gaffer, Foley artist, best boy, key grip—these are some of the mysterious titles that roll by as you brush popcorn from your lap and head for the exit. Who are they? What do they contribute to the final product on the screen? How do they make a difference in the way a movie looks and sounds?

It is only fitting that the final chapter of this book is dedicated to the unsung heroes of the film business—the men and women behind the scenes that make the magic happen. To that end, let's take a deeper look at the final credit roll of a typical motion picture.

There is a dividing line that passes through the budget of every film. Above the line are the creative collaborators, sometimes known as "talent" that generally account for about 30 percent of the budget. Writers, producers, directors, and actors are included in this category. The opening credits favor the "above the line" personnel. They acknowledge the distributor who provides a significant portion of the film's financing and is responsible for marketing, setting a release date, and arranging distribution as well as the production company responsible for developing and filming the movie.

There's a credit for the director (e.g., "An Alan Smithee Film") and title credits for the lead and supporting cast. The screenwriter, casting director, music composer, cinematographer, production designer, costume designer, and editor are also credited up front. The audience is effectively hostage to these credits because they play before the opening scene of the film.

In contrast, the essential workers on a movie set are acknowledged after the film's final scene fades out. Their names are listed on a fast-moving scroll that most of the audience fail to notice as they head for the exits or reach for the remote. The size and composition of the production team varies from one production to the next as does the order in which credit is given. Listed in alphabetical order, the credits below are by no means universal but are intended to convey the diversity and multiplicity of the army of collaborators on a large production.

Art Department

Under the supervision of the production designer, the art department designs the overall look of the film. In preproduction, they create sketches, renderings, and models that are used as a basis in set construction, set dressing, and prop acquisition.

Assistant Director

The assistant director tracks progress against the production schedule, prepares call sheets for cast and crew, and maintains order on set. Both Hitchcock and Kurosawa started as ADs, but today the position is more managerial and logistical than creative.

Best Boy

The chief assistant to the key grip (best boy grip) or gaffer (best boy electric) on a film set is known as the best boy. The gender-neutral replacement "lead grip" and "lead electric" have begun to replace this antiquated title which goes back to master-apprentice nomenclature.

Boom Operator

The boom operator is responsible for recording high-quality sound on set. They hold a long pole with a microphone on the end (known as a boom) above the actors, capturing their dialogue while minimizing background noise.

Camera Operator

Reporting to the director of photography, the camera operator is responsible for hands-on operation of the camera. Their crew may include a first assistant, a second assistant, a focus puller, an assistant camera operator, a "B" camera operator, camera loader, clapper loader, digital imaging technician, Steadicam operator, and various camera production assistants, interns, and trainees.

Colorist

In postproduction, the colorist oversees color grading and correcting all footage shot during production to achieve a consistent look for the entire film. They can correct inconsistencies or errors in the raw footage as well as alter footage to create a specific look or mood.

Costumer or Set Costumer

The costumer ensures that each costume fits the character and supports the overall visual style of the film. The set costumer works directly with the actors on set to make sure that their costume fits properly and is consistent from one scene to the next.

Costume Supervisor

The costume supervisor oversees selecting and fitting costumes worn by actors and maintaining those costumes in good condition throughout the production. They appear on set to oversee costume changes and ensure visual continuity. On a major production, they may oversee thousands of costumes.

Craft Services

Catering and craft services workers (known on set as "crafty") provide food and drinks to the cast and crew. Their name derives from a film's physical production "crafts" such as set construction and decoration.

Editorial

In postproduction, the editor and their team review and select the best take of each shot and assemble a cut of the film. After refining the story, pacing, and tone to the satisfaction of the director and producer, they add computer-generated imagery, sound effects, Foley, and music to create the final version of the film.

Gaffer

The head electrician on the set is called the gaffer. They oversee the lighting design, setup, and maintenance on the set and address any other electrical needs of the production. The name dates to English lamplighters who tended streetlights with a gaff or hooked pole.

Grip

The "muscle" behind the scenes on a movie set, grips possess a complex skill set that includes carpentry, electronics, mechanics, and design. They are often the first personnel to set up equipment and the last ones to leave at the end of the day. In between, they keep everything running smoothly. The "dolly grip" controls the movement of dolly cart on its tracks. The "key grip" is in charge of this group.

Hair and Makeup

Often grouped together, hair and makeup comprise two separate crews on a movie set. Hair stylists are tasked with creating and maintaining a variety of looks for lead and secondary actors. The key makeup artist oversees makeup design for the entire production. Depending on the production, makeup artists apply makeup to principle and secondary actors. Special effects makeup artists are employed for wounds, prosthetics, and creature effects.

Line Producer

Unlike the producers in the opening credits, the line producer works on the film set making sure that the day-to-day needs of the cast and crew are met. This can involve anything from arranging transportation and food to locating equipment and securing locations.

Location Manager

The location manager is responsible for scouting and securing filming locations for the production. They work with the production designer and director to find suitable locations that fit the script and the visual style of the film.

Production Assistants

Production assistants (PAs) work in various roles to support the production crew. They may be responsible for tasks such as escorting crew members, managing paperwork, setting up equipment, or assisting with catering and craft services.

Production Coordinator

Working under the production manager, the production coordinator's duties are often varied and loosely defined, including office manager, controller, accountant, and enforcer. They supervise production assistants.

Postproduction Sound

The postproduction sound team creates and mixes the sound for the final film. They work with the director and editor to ensure that the sound effects, Foley, dialogue, and music all work together to create an immersive and effective auditory experience.

Prop Master

The prop master acquires and manages all props needed for a film production. A prop (short for "property" as in "property of Warner Brothers") is any object an actor handles during a performance.

Script Supervisor

The script supervisor, also known as the continuity supervisor, ensures that all scenes are filmed according to the script and that continuity is maintained throughout the production. They keep track of camera angles, props, wardrobe, and other details to ensure that each shot matches the previous take.

Set Decorator

The set decorator is responsible for selecting and arranging the furniture, fabrics, and other decorative elements on set. They work with the production designer to ensure that the sets match the visual style of the film and enhance the story.

Set Designer

Much of a movie's mise-en-scène is envisioned and created by the set designer in collaboration with the production designer.

Sound Mixer

All the recorded sound on a movie set goes to a central mixing station where the sound mixer (sometimes called the sound recordist) is responsible for monitoring and recording clean, consistent audio for use in postproduction.

Special Effects Supervisor

The special effects supervisor creates and manages special effects for the film, such as explosions, smoke, and other visual effects. They work with the director and cinematographer to ensure that the effects are realistic and are executed safely.

Stunt Coordinator

The stunt coordinator oversees the design and execution of dangerous or difficult stunts for the actors. Usually an experienced stunt performer, the stunt coordinator auditions stunt performers and helps coordinate, budget, and design stunt sequences. They work with the director and cinematographer to ensure that the stunts are filmed safely and effectively.

Stunt Performer

Also known as a stuntman or stuntwoman, the stunt performer is a trained professional who performs physically demanding or dangerous stunts during the production of a film. If they act in place of another performer, they are known as a stunt double.

Transportation Coordinator

The transportation coordinator (known on set as "transpo") manages the transportation of the cast and crew to and from filming locations. They ensure that everyone arrives on time and safely and that the equipment is transported to the set as needed.

Unit Production Manager

The top "below the line" staff position is responsible for administration, that is, everything that might come up in the course of production. Working closely with a line producer, they handle the day-to-day running of the set.

Visual Effects Artist

The visual effects artist creates digital effects for the film, such as computer-generated characters, landscapes, and other elements. This can range from erasing wires or rigging to creating entire environments. They work with the director and cinematographer to ensure that the effects match the visual style of the live action.

A Day in the Life of a Film Crew

Each day of a film's production period, a "call sheet," is issued that specifies the required arrival time for each member of the cast and crew. Due to the exorbitant daily cost incurred by the production company during the film's shooting period (known as "principle photography"), each day starts early (usually before sunrise) and often runs into the night.

The first personnel to arrive on set are typically the key members of the production team, including the assistant director, production coordinator, and various department heads. They arrive first to ensure that everything needed for the day's shoot has been secured and that the schedule is on track. The assistant director (or AD) reviews the call sheet outlining the shooting schedule, scene breakdowns, and specific requirements for each department.

The production coordinator will arrange with the location team to set up a "base camp" on set, which functions as a physical hub for the crew. They will then coordinate transportation and interface with equipment and supply vendors.

The department heads include the director of photography (DP), the art director, and the sound mixer. The DP scouts the day's location, plans camera angles, and designs the lighting setup. The art director reviews and adjusts the day's set, set dressing, and props. The sound mixer sets up recording equipment and conducts sound checks to confirm that all the gear is in good working order.

The next wave to arrive are camera operators, lighting technicians, sound crew, grips, and other support personnel. The camera, lighting, and sound teams set up their workstations for the day, arrange equipment, and prepare for the shoot. This includes unpacking gear, assembling cameras, testing lights, and organizing supplies so that they are quickly accessible in the heat of production.

At the same time, the production coordinator goes over the call sheet and ensures that all necessary paperwork, permits, and releases are in order. Any last-minute changes or updates to the schedule are then communicated to cast and crew. The art director and set dressers finalize the day's set design and decoration, adjusting, adding finishing touches, and arranging props for the first scene to be filmed.

Once the camera, lighting, and sound setups are complete, the director and assistant director will gather the cast on set to do a run-through of the day's first scene. They will rehearse blocking (the actor's movements and positions) and timing. This gives the actors an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the physical layout of the set and handle any props used in the scene. It also gives the director a chance to fine-tune the scene before the camera begin to roll.

As the actors rehearse the scene on set, the DP uses the run-through to work out camera movements, framing, and focus points. The grip and electric team position lights and adjust intensity. The sound crew arranges audio recording devices on set to achieve the best dialogue recording possible. The art department makes final adjustments to set dressing and props. These activities lay the foundation for the day's shoot and ensure that the set, equipment, crew, and cast are all prepared when the director calls "action."

At this point, the actors get into costume and head to a trailer where the hair and makeup team go to work. The costume supervisor makes adjustments to make sure that the actors' costumes are complete and properly fitted. Once an actor's costume, hair and makeup are ready, they will return to the set for a run-through without recording to finalize camera movements, timing, and technical cues such as the firing of explosive "squibs" in a gunfight.

The camera team uses this final run-through to practice camera tracking, focus pulls, and specialized shots. The sound crew activates tiny wireless microphones that are concealed in the actors' costumes and conduct sound checks. They adjust sound levels and listen for unwanted background noise. Once all crew members are ready and in place, the actors will take their starting positions and the assistant direct will call "last looks." This is

the final opportunity for the hair, makeup, and costume departments to make last-minute adjustments. The AD then calls "roll sound," "roll camera," and "slate" before the director calls "action" and the first shot of the day is recorded. It is now 8:00 a.m., and the sky in the East is just starting to glow.

Over the course of the next hour, multiple takes will be recorded to capture different angles, performance, and technical variations as the crew work to maintain continuity of lighting, sound, and the overall aesthetic of the scene. This process will be repeated throughout the workday and into the night . . . and again the following day and the day after that. Days turn into weeks and the production takes on a life of its own. Unanticipated events and situations arise that test the skills and resources of every member of the crew.

Some productions get by with a minimum of disruptions. Others seem to labor under a curse. Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) was one of the most troubled productions in history. A series of typhoons and monsoon rains destroyed major portions of the set. One of the lead actors (Marlon Brando) arrived on set unprepared and grossly overweight. The lead (Martin Sheen) suffered a heart attack and had to be hospitalized. Principle photography stretched from months to over a year. The budget ballooned from $12 million to over $30 million, with the director mortgaging his home and diverting his personal resources to keep the film afloat. Despite these challenges, the film went on to become a critical and commercial success, earning multiple Academy Award nominations and leaving an indelible mark on the history of cinema.

In the end, bonds are forged in adversity. The long hours and intense demands of film production build camaraderie, unlike any other commercial enterprise. The support system built on set translates into a professional network that will endure after the production wraps and (hopefully) lead to the next gig for each member of the production team.

Coda

At the end of *Babylon* (Chazelle, 2023), Hollywood gossip columnist Elinor St. John offers the following words of cold comfort to fading screen icon Jack Conrad:

> In a hundred years, when you and I are long gone, anytime someone threads a frame of yours through a sprocket, you will be alive again. You see what that means . . . ? One day every person in every film shot this year will be dead. And one day those films will be pulled out of vaults and all their ghosts will dine together, adventure together, go to the jungle or to war together. A child born in fifty years will stumble upon your image flickering on a screen and feel he knows you like a friend though you breathed your last before he breathed his first. You've been given a gift. Be grateful. Your time today is through, but you'll spend eternity with angels and ghosts.

The enduring power of cinema is its unique ability to capture time and hold it suspended in celluloid or digital bytes for eternity. Each time we watch a film, we experience a privileged brush with immortality that exerts a field akin to magic.

Cinema is more than just a form of entertainment or a means of escape. It is a powerful force that can move, inspire, and connect people from every culture and walk of life. It is an art form that celebrates the human experience, and its enduring legacy will continue to shape and influence generations to come. It provides filmgoers with a world of endless possibilities, where creativity and imagination are celebrated, and where the power of storytelling continues to captivate and inspire us.

The great technological developments that make movies possible—photography, synchronized sound, color, and digital media—are just the beginning. As technology evolves,

new innovations will enable even more immersive cinematic experiences. The future of motion pictures is likely to be shaped by emerging advances in artificial intelligence (AI), virtual and augmented reality (VR and AR), holographic imaging, and high-bandwidth communication networks.

Digital technology provides filmmakers with advanced tools to create images and sounds constructed entirely of synthetic materials. It gives the filmmaker greater control over the image with the ability to make creative adjustments to lighting, focus, and exposure on the fly. In postproduction, digital software allows the editor to manipulate the image in an infinite variety of ways. Digital sound gives filmmakers the power to create immersive and convincing soundscapes for practically any environment.

Computer-generated imagery (CGI) can be used to fabricate believable settings and creatures that would be impossible to create with practical effects. In addition, artificial intelligence and the internet afford access to a vast repository of reference materials for use in cinematic image-making.

For independent filmmakers, production is now easier and more affordable. Digital cameras and editing software make it possible to create high-quality films on a much lower budget. For example, the award-winning film *Tangerine* (2015) was shot entirely on the streets of Los Angeles with nothing more than an iPhone 5s.

Facial motion capture allows a director to alter an actor's facial expression (or overall appearance) using special cameras and software that record their facial movements and expressions. These can also be used to map those movements onto a digital model or character. This technology can be used to create nuanced performances in films, as well as to create digital characters that look and move like real people. For example, the character Gollum in the *Lord of the Rings* (2001–2003) films was created using motion capture technology, with actor Andy Serkis providing the performance that was then mapped onto the digital character.

It is also possible to map an actor's performance from previous films. For example, in the fifth film of the Indiana Jones franchise, *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny* (2023), the actor Harrison Ford appears youthful and vital performing a variety of challenging athletic feats even though he was almost eighty years old at the time of production. Digital technology rejuvenated the actor's face and CGI provided digital doubles for complex stunts and action sequences that were too risky for the actor himself.

Thanks to these advances, it is now possible to digitally resurrect Marilyn Monroe or clone James Dean using CGI and deep learning algorithms. To quote Dorothy from *Wizard of Oz* (1939), "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

Glossary

A

antagonist: Anything blocking the protagonist's movement toward a goal.

ADR: Automatic Dialogue Replacement. A process in which actors re-record dialogue in a studio after filming to improve clarity or adjust sound.

aperture: The adjustable opening in the center of a camera lens, also known as iris.

aspect ratio: The proportion of width to height of the film frame. Common aspect ratios in film include 1.33:1, 1.85:1, 2.35:1, and 16:9.

auteur theory: Emphasizes the role of the director as the "author" of the film.

axis of action: An imaginary line through the center of a scene that maintains continuity in filming and editing.

B

backlighting: Lighting that comes from behind a subject, creating a silhouette effect.

barndoors: A set of flaps to direct output from a light on set.

best boy: First assistant to the gaffer on a movie set.

bird's eye: An aerial camera angle.

Blacklist: A list that denied employment to film workers suspected of communist sympathies.

Black Maria: Edison's first film studio, so-named because it resembled a police paddy wagon.

blocking: The choreography of actors' movements and positions in a scene.

boom mic: A microphone mounted on a long pole, used to capture audio while staying out of the shot.

B-roll: Additional footage used to support or supplement the principle footage.

C

camera angle: The position of the camera in relation to the subject. Common angles include high angle, low angle, and eye level.

***camera obscura*:** The earliest camera design predating film.

CGI: Computer-generated imagery used in visual effects.

character placement: Location of the characters within the film frame.

***chiaroscuro* lighting:** Literally "light and dark," a style of soft lighting inspired by painting.

chronotope: Coordinates of time and space in a narrative.

cinematography: The art and technique of capturing images on film or digital media.

***cinéma verité*:** Documentary filmmaking approach using unobtrusive equipment and extended production periods to capture real-life situations.

close-up: A shot that focuses on a subject's face or a specific detail.

color value: Perceptual intensity of color. Often used symbolically.

composition: The arrangement of visual material within the film frame.

continuity: The consistency of details between shots or scenes, such as clothing or props.

cut: A transition between shots, in which one shot is replaced by another.

D

density: Amount of visual information contained within the film frame.

depth of field: The distance between the closest and farthest objects in focus within a shot.

design: The visual material contained within the film frame.

diegesis: The world of the film.

diegetic sound: Sound that originates in the world of the film, such as dialogue, music played by characters, or ambient noise.

direct cinema: see *cinéma verité*.

director: The person responsible for overseeing the creative vision of a film.

dissolve: A transition between shots in which one image fades out as another fades in.

dolly: A wheeled cart on tracks used to create smooth camera movement.

dominant: The first place the eye goes within the frame.

E

editing: The process of selecting and arranging footage to create the final film.

ellipsis: An abridgement in time created by editing.

establishing shot: A shot that establishes the location or setting of a scene.

exposure: The amount of light allowed to enter the camera during filming.

experimental film: Also known as *avant garde* film, refers to use of film's formal elements to create visual art outside of narrative and documentary conventions.

eyeline match: An editing technique that cuts from an actor's gaze to the subject of the gaze.

F

fade: A transition between shots in which one image fades to black as another fades in.

film noir: Literally "black film," it describes a distinct visual style coupled with narrative conventions including a doomed protagonist and a *femme fatale*.

Foley: The process of creating sound effects in postproduction, such as footsteps or the rustling of clothing.

form: How a shot is framed, such as open, closed, proscenium, or frame-in-frame.

frame rate: The number of frames per second captured by a camera.

frame: The visual boundary of the image.

French flag: A device to keep light from directly striking the camera lens.

freeze frame: A still image printed in succession in a film to "freeze" the motion.

G

gauge: The size of the film or sensor in the camera.

genre: A category or classification of films based on similar themes or conventions.

German Expressionism: A film movement of the 1920s that sought to express inner states through external visuals.

graphic match cut: A technique of continuity editing that links two shots using a common graphic element.

gobo: A metal stencil mounted on a light source to create a pattern of light.

gaffer: Chief electrician on a movie set.

grip: Crew member responsible for setting up and maintaining equipment on set.

H

handheld camera: Also known as "shaky cam," used to convey documentary-style realism.

Hays Code: The Motion Picture Production Code.

high-angle shot: The camera looks down on the subject.

high key lighting: Lighting that creates bright, even illumination with few shadows.

HUAC: House Un-American Activities Committee.

I

iconography: Visual imagery that carries connotative meaning in a film.

iris: An optical effect in which the shot is surrounded by a circle that slowly expands or contracts to reveal or obscure the image.

intrinsic interest: An area in the frame that draws our attention based on dramatic or contextual importance.

J

jump cut: An abrupt transition between two similar shots, often used to create a jarring or dramatic effect.

K

key light: The primary source of light illuminating the subject in a shot.

key grip: The chief grip on a movie set.

L

lavalier mic: A small, wireless microphone attached to an actor on set.

lens: The tube of glass through which images pass to the camera.

long shot: A shot that shows the subject from a distance.

low key lighting: Lighting that creates strong contrast and deep shadows.

Lumière brothers: French filmmakers who invented the first practical motion picture camera and projector.

M

master shot: A wide shot that captures the entire scene.

MacGuffin: Object, detail, or event that serves to drive the plot but is ultimately irrelevant to the story.

match on action: Continuity editing that uses an on-screen action as a bridge between shots.

mise-en-scène: The design and composition of every element within the frame.

montage: A sequence of shots edited together to convey a specific message or idea.

N

narrative: Another word for story, it also describes fiction film.

narration: The act of telling a story.

narrator: Who or what tells the story. In film, the camera is the primary narrator.

neorealism: Realistic filmmaking style pioneered by Italian filmmakers in the years following WWII.

neutral density filter: A camera filter used to reduce the amount of light that enters the camera, allowing for wider apertures and slower shutter speeds.

new wave: A series of film movements starting in France that emphasize new forms of cinematic expression.

nondiegetic sound: Sound that does not originate from a source visible on screen, such as background music or voice-over narration.

nonlinear editing: A method of editing where footage can be accessed in any order, regardless of how it was shot chronologically.

numbered takes: A system of numbering each take during filming, making it easier to identify specific takes during the editing process.

O

off-screen: Sound or action that occurs outside the frame of the shot.

***Oneiros*:** A Greek personification of dreams.

open matte: A technique used in filming where the full frame of the image is captured, including areas that will later be cropped out.

opticals: Special visual effects created during the postproduction process, such as titles, dissolves, and fades.

outtake: A portion of footage that is not used in the final edit of the film.

overcranking: A technique used to film in slow motion, where the camera is operated at a faster frame rate than the playback rate.

P

pan: A camera movement where the camera pivots horizontally, creating a sweeping motion.

pan-and-scan: A technique used in the conversion of widescreen films to full screen format, where a portion of the original image is cropped to fit the new aspect ratio.

parallel editing: A technique used in filmmaking where multiple storylines are edited together in a way that creates a sense of simultaneity.

POV: An abbreviation for "point of view," typically used to describe a shot that represents what a character is seeing.

practical effect: A physical effect created on set using props, makeup, or other practical means, as opposed to a computer-generated effect.

preproduction: The planning stage of filmmaking where the script is developed, the cast and crew are hired, and the logistics of the shoot are arranged.

producer: The person responsible for overseeing the entire production of a film, including financing, hiring, and logistics.

prop: Short for property, a prop is anything handled by the actors on set.

protagonist: The main character or hero in a narrative.

proxemics: Proximity of elements within the frame and in relation to the camera.

R

rack focus: The focus of the camera shifts from a subject in the foreground to a subject in the background or vice versa.

rear projection: A technique used to combine foreground action with a prefilmed background, typically used in driving scenes.

RED camera: A type of digital camera used in filmmaking known for its high resolution and dynamic range.

reshoot: A filming session that occurs after the initial shoot is complete, typically to fix or improve certain aspects of the film.

reverse shot: A shot that shows the opposite side of the action, often used in dialogue scenes.

rough cut: An early version of the film that is assembled during the editing process, usually without final sound, music, or special effects.

S

SAG-AFTRA: The Screen Actors Guild—American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, a labor union representing performers in the entertainment industry.

screenplay: The written script of a film, including dialogue, action, description, and narration.

screenwriter: The person responsible for writing the screenplay.

screwball comedy: Comedic subgenre known for fast-talking dialogue and chaotic action.

script supervisor: The person responsible for keeping track of continuity and ensuring that each shot matches the script.

sequel: A film that continues the story of a previous film.

set: The physical location where filming takes place.

setup: A specific arrangement of lights, camera, sound equipment, and actors.

shot: A single uninterrupted sequence of film that is captured by the camera.

shot list: A document that outlines each shot that will be filmed, including camera position, movement, and focus.

shot reverse shot: A technique used in dialogue scenes where the camera alternates between two characters.

slow motion: A technique used to create the illusion of slowed-down movement, typically achieved by filming at a higher frame rate than playback.

Soviet montage: A theory of filmmaking that relies heavily on editing to create meaning.

sound design: The process of creating and manipulating sound effects to enhance the overall audio experience of the film.

sound stage: Expansive, sound-proofed filming area on the lot of a motion picture studio.

special effects: Any nonpractical effect created using computer-generated imagery or other technical means.

staging position: Direction actor faces in relation to the camera.

Steadicam: A camera stabilization system used to create smooth, fluid shots.

storyboard: A visual representation of the film's scenes and shots, typically used in preproduction planning.

studio: A facility used for film production and postproduction.

stunt: A risky physical performance designed to create dramatic effect in a film.

subsidiary contrasts: Main eye-stops after the dominant within the film frame.

synchronous sound: Sound recorded in synch with filmed images.

T

take: A single filmed version of a shot or scene.

telephoto lens: A type of lens used in filmmaking that allows for a narrow field of view and can make distant objects appear closer.

three-act structure: A storytelling technique that divides the plot of a film into three distinct acts, typically including a setup, confrontation, and resolution.

three-point lighting: A lighting setup using a key light, fill light, and back light.

tracking shot: A shot where the camera moves along with the action, typically following a character or object.

trailer: A short promotional film used to advertise a movie before its release.

transitions: The way one shot moves into another, typically achieved through a cut, dissolve, or wipe.

treatment: A preliminary document outlining the overall concept and plot of a film.

tri-strip: Early color film process requiring three separate film strips.

two-shot: A shot that includes two characters in the frame, typically used in dialogue scenes.

U

underlighting: Unnatural lighting from below typically reserved for horror films.

undercranking: A technique used to create a sped-up effect by filming at a slower frame rate than playback.

unreliable narration: Narration that calls into question the reliability of the narrator.

V

verisimilitude: The quality of having the appearance of truth.

visual effects: Digital imaging created in postproduction.

video village: An area on set where the director and other key crew members can view live footage from the camera.

voice-over: Dialogue spoken by a character who is not seen on screen.

W

walla: Background crowd noise generated by background characters repeating the word "walla".

wide-angle lens: A short focal-length lens with a wide angle of view.

widescreen: A film format that has a wider aspect ratio than standard film, allowing for a broader field of view.

wild sound: Sound recorded separately from the visuals, typically used for background noise or ambient sound.

wipe: An editing transition that joins two shots via a passing vertical or horizonal line.

X

xenon lamp: A high-intensity lamp used in film projectors.

XLR: A durable electrical connector used for audio equipment on a movie set.

Z

zoom: A camera movement where the lens zooms in or out, creating the illusion of the camera moving closer or farther away from the subject.

zooproxiscope: Early motion picture projector used by Eadweard Muybridge.

Filmography

Roundhay Garden Scene (1888)
L'Arrivee d'un train en gare de la Ciotat (1895)
Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory (1895)
The Kiss (1896)
A Trip to the Moon (1902)
Life of an American Fireman (1903)
The Great Train Robbery (1903)
In Old California (1910)
The Squaw Man (1914)
Birth of a Nation (1915)
Broken Blossoms (1919)
Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1921)
The Kid (1921)
Nosferatu (1922)
La Fille de L'eau (1925)
Anèmic Cinéma (1926)
The General (1926)
Metropolis (1927)
Napoleon (1927)
Sunrise (1927)
The Jazz Singer (1927)
The Broadway Melody (1929)
Pandora's Box (1929)
Un Chien Andalou (1929)

City Lights (1931)
Dracula (1931)
Frankenstein (1931)
Little Caesar (1931)
Public Enemy (1931)
The Mummy (1932)
Scarface (1932)
Duck Soup (1933)
Ecstasy (1933)
King Kong (1933)
It Happened One Night (1934)
Triumph of the Will (1935)
Les Bas-fonds (1936)
My Man Godfrey (1936)
La Grande Illusion (1937)
Bringing Up Baby (1938)
Gone with the Wind (1939)
Wizard of Oz (1939)
The Grapes of Wrath (1940)
Citizen Kane (1941)
The Maltese Falcon (1941)
Aniki Bóbó (1942)
Casablanca (1942)
Meshes in the Afternoon (1943)
Double Indemnity (1944)
The Big Sleep (1946)
It's a Wonderful Life (1946)
Notorious (1946)
Black Narcissus (1947)
Lady in the Lake (1947)
Rope (1948)
The Red Shoes (1948)
Stray Dog (1949)
The Third Man (1949)
Sunset Boulevard (1950)
The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951)
Singin' in the Rain (1952)
The Big Heat (1953)

I Confess (1953)
Rear Window (1954)
Them! (1954)
The Apu Trilogy (1955-59)
Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956)
The Killing (1956)
The Searchers (1956)
Paths to Glory (1957)
Tokyo Twilight (1957)
Twelve Angry Men (1957)
Touch of Evil (1958)
Vertigo (1958)
The 400 Blows (1959)
Look Back in Anger (1959)
The World of Apu (1959)
Psycho (1960)
The Magnificent Seven (1960)
Breathless (1961)
A Taste of Honey (1961)
Dog Star Man (1961-64)
Lawrence of Arabia (1962)
8 ½ (1963)
Barren Lives (1963)
The Birds (1963)
High and Low (1963)
Mothlight (1963)
The Sporting Life (1963)
Black God, White Devil (1964)
Dr. Strangelove (1964)
A Fist Full of Dollars (1964)
Soy Cuba (1964)
Umbrellas of Cherbourg (1964)
Bonnie and Clyde (1965)
The Sound of Music (1965)
Blow-Up (1966)
Change of Life (1966)
The Pornographers (1966)
Torn Curtain (1966)

What's Up, Tigerlily? (1966)
Bonnie and Clyde (1967)
Closely Watched Trains (1967)
The Fireman's Ball (1967)
The Graduate (1967)
Le Samouraï (1967)
2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)
It Rains in My Village (1968)
Romeo and Juliet (1968)
The Hour of the Furnaces (1968)
The Love Bug (1968)
Bhuvan Shome (1969)
Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969)
Early Works (1969)
Easy Rider (1969)
The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly (1969)
Midnight Cowboy (1969)
The Wild Bunch (1969)
Le Cercle Rouge (1970)
A Clockwork Orange (1971)
WR: Mysteries of the Organism (1971)
The Godfather Trilogy (1972-1990)
Day for Night (1973)
The Exorcist (1973)
The Princess Bride (1973)
Alice in the Cities (1974)
Ankur (1974)
Chinatown (1974)
The Conversation (1974)
Texas Chain Saw Massacre (1974)
Grey Gardens (1975)
Jaws (1975)
Picnic at Hanging Rock (1975)
All the President's Men (1976)
In the Realm of the Senses (1976)
Network (1976)
Taxi Driver (1976)
The Front (1976)

The Last Tycoon (1976)
Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977)
Star Wars (1977)
Suspiria (1977)
The Duellists (1977)
Halloween (1978)
Killer of Sheep (1978)
Alien (1979)
Apocalypse Now (1979)
Bush Mama (1979)
Mad Max (1979)
Night of the Living Dead (1979)
The Tin Drum (1979)
Friday the 13th (1980)
Raging Bull (1980)
The Shining (1980)
Blow Out (1981)
Diva (1981)
Reds (1981)
Blade Runner (1982)
Fitzcarraldo (1982)
Smithereens (1982)
The Verdict (1982)
Thriller (1983)
Body Double (1984)
Boy Meets Girl (1984)
Stranger Than Paradise (1984)
The Terminator (1984)
Back to the Future (1985)
Legend (1985)
Ran (1985)
The Breakfast Club (1985)
The Right Side of My Brain (1985)
Blue Velvet (1986)
The Fly (1986)
Full Metal Jacket (1987)
Someone to Watch Over Me (1987)
The Last Emperor (1987)

Wall Street (1987)
Wings of Desire (1987)
Big (1988)
A City of Sadness (1989)
Black Rain (1989)
The Killer (1989)
Close-up (1990)
Edward Scissorhands (1990)
La Femme Nikita (1990)
Goodfellas (1990)
Paris is Burning (1990)
Wild at Heart (1990)
A Better Tomorrow (1991)
Daughters of the Dust (1991)
Delicatessen (1991)
Guilty by Suspicion (1991)
Naked Lunch (1991)
Raise the Red Lantern (1991)
Thelma & Louise (1991)
1492: Conquest of Paradise (1992)
Aladdin (1992)
Reservoir Dogs (1992)
Strictly Ballroom (1992)
The Candyman (1992)
The Player (1992)
The Unforgiven (1992)
Blue (1993)
Jurassic Park (1993)
Schindler's List (1993)
Sonatine (1993)
Chungking Express (1994)
Dumb and Dumber (1994)
Hoop Dreams (1994)
Léon: The Professional (1994)
Pulp Fiction (1994)
Red (1994)
Shawshank Redemption (1994)
Vive L'Amour (1994)

White (1994)
Before Sunrise (1995)
Casino (1995)
City of Lost Children (1995)
Get Shorty (1995)
Heat (1995)
Living in Oblivion (1995)
Se7en (1995)
Strange Days (1995)
The Greeting (1995)
The White Balloon (1995)
From Dusk till Dawn (1996)
Gabbeh (1996)
Mission: Impossible (1996)
Scream (1996)
The English Patient (1996)
Trainspotting (1996)
White Squall (1996)
Boogie Nights (1997)
G.I. Jane (1997)
Lost Highway (1997)
Pi (1997)
Celebration (1998)
Great Expectations (1998)
Pleasantville (1998)
Saving Private Ryan (1998)
Snake Eyes (1998)
The Idiots (1998)
There's Something About Mary (1998)
Truman Show (1998)
American Beauty (1999)
Bowfinger (1999)
Existenz (1999)
Fight Club (1999)
Man on the Moon (1999)
Run Lola Run (1999)
The Matrix (1999)
The Sixth Sense (1999)

American Psycho (2000)
Amores Perros (2000)
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000)
Gladiator (2000)
In the Mood for Love (2000)
Memento (2000)
Requiem for a Dream (2000)
State and Main (2000)
The Passions (2000)
Timecode (2000)
Unbreakable (2000)
A Beautiful Mind (2001)
Black Hawk Down (2001)
Donnie Darko (2001)
Hannibal (2001)
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (2001)
Moulin Rouge! (2001)
Mulholland Drive (2001)
Shrek (2001)
The Fast and the Furious (2001)
The Fellowship of the Ring (2001)
The Royal Tenenbaums (2001)
Waking Life (2001)
Y Tu Mamá También (2001)
Adaptation (2002)
Bowling for Columbine (2002)
Going Forth By Day (2002)
Hero (2002)
Signs (2002)
Spiderman (2002)
City of God (2003)
Freaky Friday (2003)
Irreversible (2003)
Matchstick Men (2003)
Pirates of the Caribbean (2003)
Russian Ark (2003)
The Matrix Reloaded (2003)
The Room (2003)

13 Going On 30 (2004)
A Very Long Engagement (2004)
Consequences of Love (2004)
Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (2004)
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (2004)
The Aviator (2004)
The Machinist (2004)
Crash (2005)
Good Night, and Good Luck (2005)
Kingdom of Heaven (2005)
The Death of Mr. Lazarescu (2005)
4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days (2006)
12:08 East of Bucharest (2006)
A Very Good Year (2006)
Children of Men (2006)
Hostel (2006)
Pan's Labyrinth (2006)
Still Life (2006)
The Departed (2006)
Across the Universe (2007)
American Gangster (2007)
Atonement (2007)
No Country for Old Men (2007)
Sicko (2007)
Zodiac (2007)
Body of Lies (2008)
Let the Right One In (2008)
The Dark Knight (2008)
WALL-E (2008)
Avatar (2009)
Capitalism: A Love Story (2009)
District 9 (2009)
Enter the Void (2009)
Inglorious Bastards (2009)
The Hurt Locker (2009)
Black Swan (2010)
Inception (2010)
Robin Hood (2010)

The Social Network (2010)
Cowboys and Aliens (2011)
Drive (2011)
In a Better World (2011)
The Artist (2011)
The Tree of Life (2011)
Hunger Games (2012)
Life of Pi (2012)
Moonrise Kingdom (2012)
Prometheus (2012)
12 Years a Slave (2013)
Blue is the Warmest Color (2013)
Gravity (2013)
The Counselor (2013)
The Great Gatsby (2013)
The Secret Life of Walter Mitty (2013)
Wolf of Wall Street (2013)
Zero Dark Thirty (2013)
Boyhood (2014)
Exodus: Gods and Kings (2014)
Farewell My Concubine (2014)
Gone Girl (2014)
Nightcrawler (2014)
The Grand Budapest Hotel (2014)
Whiplash (2014)
Love (2015)
Tangerine (2015)
The Martian (2015)
The Revenant (2015)
Trumbo (2015)
10 Cloverfield Lane (2016)
Hardcore Henry (2016)
La La Land (2016)
Manchester by the Sea (2016)
Moonlight (2016)
Alien: Covenant (2017)
All the Money in the World (2017)
The Disaster Artist (2017)

The Florida Project (2017)
The Greatest Showman (2017)
Thor: Ragnarok (2017)
Black Panther (2018)
Roma (2018)
Solo Face (2018)
Parasite (2019)
Tenet (2020)
CODA (2021)
Dune (2021)
House of Gucci (2021)
Licorice Pizza (2021)
Nomadland (2021)
Raw (2021)
The Last Duel (2021)
Babylon (2022)
Elvis (2022)
Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny (2023)
Napoleon (2023)

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Appendices

Appendix I

Polti's 36 Dramatic Situations

1. Supplication: The protagonist pleads for something, usually to a powerful figure.
2. Deliverance: The protagonist must rescue someone or something from danger.
3. Crime Pursued by Vengeance: The protagonist commits a crime and is pursued by someone seeking revenge.
4. Vengeance Taken for Kindred Upon Kindred: The protagonist seeks revenge for a wrong done to their family.
5. Pursuit: The protagonist must catch or capture someone or something.
6. Disaster: The protagonist experiences a disaster, which must be overcome.
7. Falling Prey to Cruelty or Misfortune: The protagonist suffers from cruelty or misfortune.
8. Revolt: The protagonist rebels against authority or the status quo.
9. Daring Enterprise: The protagonist embarks on a risky or daring mission.
10. Abduction: The protagonist is kidnapped or taken hostage.
11. The Enigma: The protagonist must solve a mystery or puzzle.
12. Obtaining: The protagonist must obtain something of value.
13. Enmity of Kin: The protagonist is in conflict with a family member or someone they consider family.
14. Rivalry of Superior vs. Inferior: The protagonist is in competition with someone who has greater power or status.
15. Adultery: The protagonist is involved in a love triangle or affair.
16. Crimes of Love: The protagonist commits a crime in the name of love.
17. Discovery of the Dishonor of a Loved One: The protagonist learns of the dishonor or disgrace of a loved one.

18. Obstacles to Love: The protagonist must overcome obstacles to be with their true love.
19. An Enemy Loved: The protagonist loves someone who is their enemy.
20. Ambition: The protagonist is driven by ambition or a desire for power.
21. Conflict with a God: The protagonist is in conflict with a higher power or deity.
22. Mistaken Jealousy: The protagonist becomes jealous based on a misunderstanding.
23. Erroneous Judgment: The protagonist makes a mistake in judgment.
24. Remorse: The protagonist feels guilty for something they have done.
25. Recovery of a Lost One: The protagonist searches for and recovers something or someone lost.
26. Loss of Loved Ones: The protagonist experiences the loss of someone they love.
27. The Illness of a Loved One: The protagonist must care for or heal a sick loved one.
28. Obstacles to Succession: The protagonist must overcome obstacles to inherit a position or title.
29. Revival: The protagonist comes back to life or experiences a rebirth.
30. Daring: The protagonist demonstrates courage or bravery in the face of danger.
31. Abandonment: The protagonist is abandoned by someone they love or depend on.
32. Supernatural Forces: The protagonist must contend with supernatural or magical forces.
33. Self-Sacrifice: The protagonist sacrifices themselves for someone or something they love.
34. Self-Indulgence: The protagonist gives in to temptation or self-indulgence.
35. Ambush: The protagonist is caught off-guard by an unexpected attack.
36. Disaster at Home: The protagonist experiences a disaster in their own home or community.

Appendix II

The Motion Picture Production Code and MPAA Rating System

PREAMBLE

Since the advent of the motion picture, religious organizations, and civic groups, as well as governmental and educational institutions, have voiced concern over the impact of motion pictures on the moral standards of our citizens. It is our responsibility to ensure, to the best of our ability, that the films we produce will be a positive influence on those who view them.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. No picture shall be produced that will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence, the sympathy of the audience shall never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil, or sin.
2. Correct standards of life, subject only to the requirements of drama and entertainment, shall be presented.
3. Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation.

4. Particular care shall be exercised in the manner in which the following subjects are treated, to the end that vulgarity and suggestiveness may be eliminated, and that good taste may be emphasized:
   a. Pointed profanity—by either title or lip—this includes the words "God," "Lord," "Jesus," "Christ" (unless they be used reverently in connection with proper religious ceremonies), "hell," "damn," "Gawd," and every other profane and vulgar expression however it may be spelled;
   b. Any licentious or suggestive nudity—in fact, or in silhouette; and any lecherous or licentious notice thereof by other characters in the picture;
   c. The illegal traffic in drugs;
   d. Any inference of sex perversion;
   e. White slavery;
   f. Miscegenation (sex relationships between the white and black races);
   g. Sex hygiene and venereal diseases;
   h. Scenes of actual childbirth—in fact or in silhouette;
   i. Children's sex organs;
   j. Ridicule of the clergy;
   k. Willful offense to any nation, race, or creed.

SPECIAL APPLICATION

These special applications are not to be construed as violations of general principles but as elaborations and interpretations thereof.

I. Crimes Against the Law:
   a. The technique of murder must be presented in a way that will not inspire imitation.
   b. Brutal killings are not to be presented in detail.
   c. Revenge in modern times shall not be justified.
   d. The law should not be ridiculed or presented in such a way as to create disrespect for established authority.
   e. The detailed treatment of crimes of passion, avarice, or lust should not be presented.

II. Sex:
   a. The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationships are an accepted or common thing.
   b. Adultery, sometimes necessary plot material, must not be explicitly treated, justified, or presented attractively.

c. Scenes of passion must be treated with an honest acknowledgment of human nature and its normal reactions. The passion for illicit sex must not be brought to the attention of an audience unless essential to the plot.
d. Excessive and lustful kissing, lustful embraces, suggestive postures, and gestures are not to be shown.
e. In general, passion should so be treated that these scenes do not stimulate the lower and baser element.

III. Vulgarity:
The treatment of low, disgusting, unpleasant, though not necessarily evil, subjects should always be subject to the dictates of good taste and a regard for the sensibilities of the audience.

IV. Obscenity:
Obscenity in word, gesture, reference, song, joke, or by suggestion (even when likely to be understood only by part of the audience) is forbidden.

V. Profanity:
Profanity including blasphemy, and other vulgar and irreverent expressions, is forbidden.

VI. Costumes:
a. Complete nudity is never permitted. This includes nudity in fact or in silhouette, and any lecherous or licentious notice thereof by other characters in the picture.
b. Undressing scenes should be avoided, and never used save where essential to the plot.
c. Indecent or undue exposure is forbidden.
d. Dancing or costumes intended to permit undue exposure or indecent movements in the dance are forbidden.

VII. Dances:
a. Dances suggesting or representing sexual actions, or indecent and suggestive movements are forbidden.
b. Dances that emphasize indecent movements are to be avoided.

VIII. Religion:
No film or episode may throw ridicule on any religious faith.

IX. Locations:
The treatment of bedrooms must be governed by good taste and delicacy.

X. National Feelings:
The use of any material that might arouse any country, race or creed to anger, contempt, or ridicule is forbidden.

XI. Titles:
Salacious, indecent, or obscene titles shall not be used.

XII. Repellent Subjects:

- **a.** The use of rape in a plot is never justifiable.
- **b.** The use of illegal drug traffic must never be presented.
- **c.** The use of liquor in American life, when not required by the plot or for proper characterization, will not be shown.

XIII. Titles and Ill-Treatment of the Dead:

Respect for the dead shall be maintained. No film or episode may throw ridicule on a respected institution, person, or on any religious belief.

* The Motion Picture Production Code was enforced by the Motion Picture Association of America from 1930 to 1968 when it was replaced by the current film rating system.

The current rating system for films in the United States is the Motion Picture Association (MPA) film rating system, also known as the MPAA rating system. The system was established in 1968, and it is used to classify movies based on their content and intended audience. This rating system is voluntary and not subject to government mandate. It consists of five ratings:

- G: General Audiences. All ages are admitted.
- PG: Parental Guidance Suggested. Some materials may not be suitable for children.
- PG-13: Parents Strongly Cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.
- R: Restricted. Children under seventeen require an accompanying parent or adult guardian.
- NC-17: No one seventeen and under admitted.

The rating system is administered by the Classification and Rating Administration (CARA), a division of the MPAA. The CARA reviews and rates all films that are released in the United States, except for those that are released independently or are not intended for commercial release. The ratings are determined by a board of parents who rate films based on their content, including violence, sex, language, and drug use.

Appendix III

Dogma 95 Manifesto and Vow of Chastity

Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in (if a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where this prop is to be found).

The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa. (Music must not be used unless it occurs where the scene is being shot.)

The camera must be handheld. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted.

The film must be in color. Special lighting is not acceptable. (If there is too little light for exposure, the scene must be cut or a single lamp be attached to the camera.)

Optical work and filters are forbidden.

The film must not contain superficial action. (Murders, weapons, etc., must not occur.)

Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. (That is to say that the film takes place here and now.)

Genre movies are not acceptable.

The film format must be Academy 35 mm.

The director must not be credited.

Furthermore, I swear as a director to refrain from personal taste! I am no longer an artist. I swear to refrain from creating a "work," as I regard the instant as more important than the whole. My supreme goal is to force the truth out of my characters and settings. I swear to do so by all the means available and at the cost of any good taste and any aesthetic considerations. Thus, I make my VOW OF CHASTITY.

Appendix IV

Ranking of the Greatest Films of All Time

a. According to the American Film Institute (AFI):

1. *Citizen Kane* (1941)
2. *The Godfather* (1972)
3. *Casablanca* (1942)
4. *Raging Bull* (1980)
5. *Singin' in the Rain* (1952)
6. *Gone with the Wind* (1939)
7. *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962)
8. *Schindler's List* (1993)
9. *Vertigo* (1958)
10. *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)
11. *City Lights* (1931)
12. *The Searchers* (1956)
13. *Star Wars* (1977)
14. *Psycho* (1960)
15. *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)
16. *Sunset Boulevard* (1950)
17. *The Graduate* (1967)
18. *The General* (1926)
19. *On the Waterfront* (1954)
20. *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946)
21. *Chinatown* (1974)
22. *Some Like It Hot* (1959)
23. *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940)

24. *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982)
25. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962)
26. *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939)
27. *High Noon* (1952)
28. *All About Eve* (1950)
29. *Double Indemnity* (1944)
30. *Apocalypse Now* (1979)
31. *The Maltese Falcon* (1941)
32. *The Godfather Part II* (1974)
33. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975)
34. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937)
35. *Annie Hall* (1977)
36. *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957)
37. *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946)
38. *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948)
39. *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964)
40. *The Sound of Music* (1965)
41. *King Kong* (1933)
42. *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967)
43. *Midnight Cowboy* (1969)
44. *The Philadelphia Story* (1940)
45. *Shane* (1953)
46. *It Happened One Night* (1934)
47. *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951)
48. *Rear Window* (1954)
49. *Intolerance* (1916)
50. *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001)
51. *West Side Story* (1961)
52. *Taxi Driver* (1976)
53. *The Deer Hunter* (1978)
54. *M*A*S*H* (1970)
55. *North by Northwest* (1959)
56. *Jaws* (1975)
57. *Rocky* (1976)
58. *The Gold Rush* (1925)
59. *Nashville* (1975)

60. *Duck Soup* (1933)
61. *Sullivan's Travels* (1941)
62. *American Graffiti* (1973)
63. *Cabaret* (1972)
64. *Network* (1976)
65. *The African Queen* (1951)
66. *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981)
67. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966)
68. *Unforgiven* (1992)
69. *Tootsie* (1982)
70. *A Clockwork Orange* (1971)
71. *Saving Private Ryan* (1998)
72. *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994)
73. *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969)
74. *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991)
75. *In the Heat of the Night* (1967)
76. *Forrest Gump* (1994)
77. *All the President's Men* (1976)
78. *Modern Times* (1936)
79. *The Wild Bunch* (1969)
80. *The Apartment* (1960)
81. *Spartacus* (1960)
82. *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927)
83. *Titanic* (1997)
84. *Easy Rider* (1969)
85. *A Night at the Opera* (1935)
86. *Platoon* (1986)
87. *12 Angry Men* (1957)
88. *Bringing Up Baby* (1938)
89. *The Sixth Sense* (1999)
90. *Swing Time* (1936)
91. *Sophie's Choice* (1982)
92. *Goodfellas* (1990)
93. *The French Connection* (1971)
94. *Pulp Fiction* (1994)
95. *The Last Picture Show* (1971)
96. *Do the Right Thing* (1989)

97. *Blade Runner* (1982)
98. *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942)
99. *Toy Story* (1995)
100. *Ben-Hur* (1959)

b. According to *TIME Magazine*:

1. *Citizen Kane* (1941)
2. *The Godfather* (1972)
3. *Tokyo Story* (1953)
4. *Vertigo* (1958)
5. *The Rules of the Game* (1939)
6. *Sunrise* (1927)
7. *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)
8. *The Searchers* (1956)
9. *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928)
10. *Seven Samurai* (1954)
11. *Singin' in the Rain* (1952)
12. *Psycho* (1960)
13. *Raging Bull* (1980)
14. *The Godfather Part II* (1974)
15. *City Lights* (1931)
16. *Casablanca* (1942)
17. *Breathless* (1960)
18. *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962)
19. *His Girl Friday* (1940)
20. *The Bicycle Thieves* (1948)
21. *Chinatown* (1974)
22. *The General* (1926)
23. *Persona* (1966)
24. *Pather Panchali* (1955)
25. *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942)
26. *Sunset Boulevard* (1950)
27. *The Conformist* (1970)
28. *The Red Shoes* (1948)
29. *Amadeus* (1984)
30. *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)
31. *Annie Hall* (1977)
32. *Sing Street* (2016)

33. *The Awful Truth* (1937)
34. *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946)
35. *The African Queen* (1951)
36. *In the Mood for Love* (2000)
37. *The Third Man* (1949)
38. *M* (1931)
39. *Wings of Desire* (1987)
40. *Jules and Jim* (1962)
41. *Some Like It Hot* (1959)
42. *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948)
43. *Nashville* (1975)
44. *The Lady Eve* (1941)
45. *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968)
46. *Fargo* (1996)
47. *The Shining* (1980)
48. *12 Years a Slave* (2013)
49. *Heat* (1995)
50. *The Gold Rush* (1925)
51. *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964)
52. *Badlands* (1973)
53. *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943)
54. *Do the Right Thing* (1989)
55. *All About My Mother* (1999)
56. *Boyz n the Hood* (1991)
57. *Fargo* (2014)
58. *Dazed and Confused* (1993)
59. *Moonlight* (2016)
60. *La Haine* (1995)
61. *The Handmaiden* (2016)
62. *Roma* (2018)
63. *Get Out* (2017)
64. *Parasite* (2019)
65. *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015)
66. *The Host* (2006)
67. *The 400 Blows* (1959)
68. *Lawrence of Arabia (restored version)* (1962)
69. *Memento* (2000)
70. *The Terminator* (1984)

71. *Dunkirk* (2017)
72. *Brokeback Mountain* (2005)
73. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004)
74. *The Social Network* (2010)
75. *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018)
76. *The Irishman* (2019)
77. *Black Panther* (2018)
78. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000)
79. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2* (2011)
80. *Inside Out* (2015)
81. *Toy Story 3* (2010)
82. *Call Me By Your Name* (2017)
83. *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012)
84. *A Separation* (2011)
85. *The Tree of Life* (2011)
86. *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014)
87. *The Farewell* (2019)
88. *Lady Bird* (2017)
89. *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (2019)
90. *Little Women* (2019)
91. *Parasite (black-and-white version)* (2019)
92. *Uncut Gems* (2019)
93. *Sound of Metal* (2019)
94. *Promising Young Woman* (2020)
95. *Da 5 Bloods* (2020)
96. *First Cow* (2019)
97. *Minari* (2020)
98. *Soul* (2020)
99. *Tenet* (2020)
100. *The Father* (2020)

c. According to Internet Movie Database (IMDb):

1. *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994)
2. *The Godfather* (1972)
3. *The Godfather: Part II* (1974)
4. *The Dark Knight* (2008)
5. *12 Angry Men* (1957)
6. *Schindler's List* (1993)

7. *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003)
8. *Pulp Fiction* (1994)
9. *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966)
10. *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001)
11. *Forrest Gump* (1994)
12. *Fight Club* (1999)
13. *Inception* (2010)
14. *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002)
15. *Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back* (1980)
16. *The Matrix* (1999)
17. *Goodfellas* (1990)
18. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975)
19. *Seven Samurai* (1954)
20. *Se7en* (1995)
21. *City of God* (2002)
22. *Interstellar* (2014)
23. *Saving Private Ryan* (1998)
24. *The Green Mile* (1999)
25. *Léon: The Professional* (1994)
26. *Life is Beautiful* (1997)
27. *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991)
28. *The Usual Suspects* (1995)
29. *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946)
30. *The Departed* (2006)
31. *Whiplash* (2014)
32. *The Prestige* (2006)
33. *American History X* (1998)
34. *The Intouchables* (2011)
35. *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991)
36. *Gladiator* (2000)
37. *The Lion King* (1994)
38. *Apocalypse Now* (1979)
39. *Joker* (2019)
40. *Back to the Future* (1985)
41. *The Shining* (1980)
42. *Spirited Away* (2001)
43. *The Terminator* (1984)
44. *Aliens* (1986)

45. *The Pianist* (2002)
46. *The Silence* (1963)
47. *The Great Dictator* (1940)
48. *The Lives of Others* (2006)
49. *Sunset Boulevard* (1950)
50. *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968)
51. *Cinema Paradiso* (1988)
52. *Psycho* (1960)
53. *The Sting* (1973)
54. *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957)
55. *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981)
56. *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948)
57. *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984)
58. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962)
59. *Avengers: Endgame* (2019)
60. *Braveheart* (1995)
61. *American Beauty* (1999)
62. *WALL·E* (2008)
63. *Modern Times* (1936)
64. *Toy Story* (1995)
65. *Amélie* (2001)
66. *Oldboy* (2003)
67. *City Lights* (1931)
68. *Heat* (1995)
69. *The Seventh Seal* (1957)
70. *Reservoir Dogs* (1992)
71. *The Apartment* (1960)
72. *The Usual Suspects* (1995)
73. *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962)
74. *The Hunt* (2012)
75. *Requiem for a Dream (2000*
76. *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018)
77. *Jurassic Park* (1993)
78. *Gone with the Wind* (1939)
79. *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989)
80. *Ali* (2001)
81. *Jaws* (1975)
82. *The Prestige* (2006)

83. *Memento* (2000)
84. *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975)
85. *Die Hard* (1988)
86. *Scarface* (1983)
87. *Up* (2009)
88. *Blade Runner* (1982)
89. *Avengers Assemble* (2012)
90. *Batman Begins* (2005)
91. *The Princess Bride* (1987)
92. *Full Metal Jacket* (1987)
93. *Taxi Driver* (1976)
94. *The Lion King* (2019)
95. *Million Dollar Baby* (2004)
96. *Rocky* (1976)
97. *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* (2003)
98. *Full Metal Alchemist* (2017)
99. *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012)
100. *3 Idiots* (2009)

d. According to Variety:

1. *The Godfather* (1972)
2. *Goodfellas* (1990)
3. *Jaws* (1975)
4. *The Searchers* (1956)
5. *Annie Hall* (1977)
6. *A Clockwork Orange* (1971)
7. *Schindler's List* (1993)
8. *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope* (1977)
9. *Do the Right Thing* (1989)
10. *Alien* (1979)
11. *Chinatown* (1974)
12. *The Big Lebowski* (1998)
13. *Pulp Fiction* (1994)
14. *The Dark Knight* (2008)
15. *Psycho* (1960)
16. *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991)
17. *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994)
18. *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980)

19. *The Exorcist* (1973)
20. *The Shining* (1980)
21. *Singin' in the Rain* (1952)
22. *Vertigo* (1958)
23. *Raging Bull* (1980)
24. *Taxi Driver* (1976)
25. *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981)
26. *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962)
27. *The French Connection* (1971)
28. *Blade Runner* (1982)
29. *Apocalypse Now* (1979)
30. *Gone With the Wind* (1939)
31. *Casablanca* (1942)
32. *Some Like It Hot* (1959)
33. *The Sound of Music* (1965)
34. *All About Eve* (1950)
35. *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)
36. *Rear Window* (1954)
37. *Citizen Kane* (1941)
38. *Forrest Gump* (1994)
39. *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951)
40. *Sunset Boulevard* (1950)
41. *Amadeus* (1984)
42. *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982)
43. *The Godfather: Part II* (1974)
44. *The Breakfast Club* (1985)
45. *Tootsie* (1982)
46. *Titanic* (1997)
47. *Blue Velvet* (1986)
48. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975)
49. *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946)
50. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962)
51. *The Maltese Falcon* (1941)
52. *Modern Times* (1936)
53. *12 Angry Men* (1957)
54. *Double Indemnity* (1944)
55. *The Graduate* (1967)
56. *American Graffiti* (1973)

57. *Easy Rider* (1969)
58. *Mean Streets* (1973)
59. *Boyz n the Hood* (1991)
60. *The Matrix* (1999)
61. *The Thin Man* (1934)
62. *The Wild Bunch* (1969)
63. *Deliverance* (1972)
64. *Midnight Cowboy* (1969)
65. *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1992)
66. *Network* (1976)
67. *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975)
68. *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977)
69. *Aliens* (1986)
70. *The Thing* (1982)
71. *The Fly* (1986)
72. *Blade* (1998)
73. *Candyman* (1992)
74. *The Blair Witch Project* (1999)
75. *Scream* (1996)
76. *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974)
77. *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)
78. *Halloween* (1978)
79. *Friday the 13th* (1980)
80. *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984)
81. *The Babadook* (2014)
82. *The Witch* (2015)
83. *Get Out* (2017)
84. *It Follows* (2014)
85. *Hereditary* (2018)
86. *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* (2005)
87. *The Conjuring* (2013)
88. *Paranormal Activity* (2007)
89. *The Blair Witch Project* (2016)
90. *Psycho* (1998)
91. *The Hunger Games* (2012)
92. *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (2018)
93. *Black Panther* (2018)
94. *Incredibles 2* (2018)

95. *Inside Out* (2015)
96. *Frozen* (2013)
97. *Toy Story 3* (2010)
98. *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010)
99. *WALL-E* (2008)
100. *Spirited Away* (2001)

Note: These lists are in a constant state of revision as new films are released.

Appendix V

Viewing Sources

The motion picture landscape has changed radically over the past decade and traditional theatrical exhibition is no longer the norm. People consume filmed media on a wide variety of delivery platforms from the watches on their wrists and the phones in their pockets to laptops, tablets, desktop monitors, flat-panel television screens, home theaters, multiplexes, and luxury venues like the Cinépolis.

Although most movies are made to be experienced in a theater setting, the reality is that most are viewed in other ways. With that in mind, here are just a few of the ways to currently access filmed entertainment:

Amazon.com/primevideo
Apple.com/apple-tv-plus
CBS.com/allaccess
Crave.ca
Crunchyroll.com
Discoveryplus.com
Disneyplus.com
Google.com/play
MAX.com
Hulu.com
Kanopy.com
NBC.com/streamingservice
Netflix.com
Paramountplus.com

Peacocktv.com
Philo.com
Shudder.com
SlingTV.com
Sundancetv.com
TikTok.com
Vimeo.com
YouTube.com/tvplus

Appendix VI

Film Festivals

Cannes Film Festival—France:
One of the most famous film festivals in the world, held annually in May.

Venice Film Festival—Italy:
One of the oldest film festivals, held in late August or early September.

Berlin International Film Festival—Germany:
One of the largest festivals, held annually in February.

Sundance Film Festival—United States:
One of the most important festivals for independent films, held annually in January.

Toronto International Film Festival—Canada:
One of the largest film festivals in North America, held annually in September.

Telluride Film Festival—United States:
A popular festival for showcasing new and independent films, held in September.

South by Southwest (SXSW)—United States:
A popular festival for showcasing films, held annually in Austin, TX, in March.

Tokyo International Film Festival—Japan:
One of the most prestigious film festivals in Asia, held annually in October.

Locarno Film Festival—Switzerland:
One of the oldest film festivals, held annually in August.

New York Film Festival—United States:
This annual festival is held in New York City in October.

Appendix VII

Writing about Film

It has been said that writing about music is like dancing to architecture. Film writing presents a similar conundrum. Although a film exists in time and space, its meaning is created in the mind of each viewer as part of a dynamic and interactive experience. Film theory, criticism, and analysis are all attempts to come to terms with this experience.

Film theory is concerned with the underlying principles, concepts, and ideas that shape the way films are made, viewed, and interpreted. It explores questions such as how films convey meaning; how audiences engage with them; and how they reflect or influence social, cultural, and political contexts. It draws on a range of disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, sociology, and semiotics, to develop analytical frameworks and tools for studying cinema.

Film criticism, on the other hand, is focused on evaluating and interpreting individual films or groups of films. It involves analyzing the various elements of a film, such as its narrative, characters, visual style, and themes, and assessing how they contribute to the film's overall impact and significance. Film criticism can take many forms, including reviews, essays, and scholarly articles, and can be written for a range of audiences, from casual moviegoers to academic specialists.

Formal analysis is a more specific type of film criticism that involves a systematic and in-depth examination of a film's formal and narrative elements. It involves breaking a film into its constituent parts and analyzing how they work together to create meaning and impact. Formal analysis can focus on different aspects of a film, such as its cinematography, editing, sound, or mise-en-scène, and can use a range of analytical tools, such as semiotics, psychoanalysis, or feminist theory.

Despite their differences, film theory, criticism, and analysis are all interconnected and mutually enriching. Film theory provides the conceptual frameworks and tools that enable

film criticism and analysis to go beyond mere description or evaluation and to explore a film's deeper meaning and how it is conveyed. Film criticism and analysis, in turn, provide concrete examples and case studies that enable film theory to test and refine ideas and concepts.

The following are a series of practical steps for creating a formal analysis of any film:

1. Watch

   This may seem obvious, but it is important to watch the film again (even if you have seen it ten times). Watching a movie for entertainment is like standing under a waterfall. The flow engages your senses, but you can't clearly see the object behind that experience.

   Watching a film with an analytical eye allows you to take a step back and observe the overall structure of the work and how the narrative, cinematography, mise-en-scène, editing, sound, and performance work together to convey the theme.
2. Research

   Research the film. This will help you understand its place in the larger cultural and cinematic landscape. Many DVDs include commentary from the director and key collaborators in the filmmaking process. These are valuable sources of insight into the filmmaker's choice of theme and how they have deployed formal techniques in service of that theme.
3. Theme

   Clearly identify the major theme of the film. A theme reflects the underlying, core meaning of the film and should be expressible in a single word or short phrase. Your choice of theme may or may not agree with a theme identified by the filmmaker or film critics. Art invites interpretation. Your view is valid if you can support it with evidence from the film.
4. Form

   Choose which formal elements you wish to include in your analysis. You can choose to go broad or deep. For example, you may want to focus entirely on the director's use of a key color to reenforce the theme across the entire film. On the other hand, you may choose to examine the use of multiple formal elements including lighting, camera angles, mise-en-scène, sound, editing, narrative structure, and performance to express theme in a single scene or sequence.
5. Thesis

   Develop a thesis statement that clearly states the objective of your analysis. The thesis should be a single sentence near the opening of your analysis, which concisely states your interpretation of the film's use of form to express theme.

6. Organize

   Create an outline with an introduction, body, and conclusion. Using your thesis statement as a guide, organize your notes to support your thesis with specific examples from the film.

7. Watch (Again)

   Watch the film again now that you have identified the theme, selected formal elements, and formed a thesis. Use this screening to gather further evidence to support your thesis. The more specific examples, the better.

8. Revise

   Writing is rewriting. Your first draft analysis is just the beginning. It is important to revise your work to assure that it is well-organized, easy to follow, and free of errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.

   It is helpful to have a reader review your first draft and provide feedback.

Index

A

Abraham Lincoln Vampire Killer, 120
Across the Universe, 126
Acting, 142–143
Actualities, 76, 104
Adaptation, 132
Adventures in the Screen Trade, 132
Aerials, 71–72
Aeschylus, 14
Aladdin, 25
Alfredson, Tomas, 102
Alice in the Cities, 97
Alien, 44, 54, 126–127
Alien: Covenant, 127
All the Money in the World, 127
All the President's Men, 132
Almodóvar, Pedro, 3, 121
Amélie, 63
American Beauty, 25, 61
American Gangster, 126–127
American Psycho, 20, 53
Amores Perros, 99
Anderson, Paul Thomas, 116
Anderson, Wes, 116
Anémic Cinéma, 96
12 Angry Men, 133
Aniki Bóbó, 99
Animatograph, 32
Ankur, 101
Anselmi, Guido, 135
Aperture, 38
Apocalypse Now, 34, 44, 60, 62, 71, 136, 154
Apu Trilogy, The, 101
Archetypes, 21–27
Arcs, 71–72
Argento, Dario, 59
Aristotle's poetics, 1–11
Aronofsky, Darren, 114–115
Arrival, 116
Art Department, 146
Art of Dramatic Writing, The, 4
Artist, The, 14, 50
Assistant director (AD), 147, 152
Atonement, 72
Australian New Wave, 98
Author, 129–136
Avatar, 106

Aviator, The, 63
Awake, 103–110
  capturing reality, 104
  documentary, 104–105
  narrative realism, 105–106
  naturalistic performance, 107
  realistic camera, 106–107
  in the realist tradition, 108–109
  reasons for realism, 107–108
  verisimilitude, 106

B

Baby Face, 46
Babylon, 45, 51, 114, 138, 142
Back to the Future, 75
Backlighting, 36
Baggins, Frodo, 22
Baker, Sean, 110
Bale, Christian, 140
Barren Lives, 99
Barton Fink, 132
Basic Instinct, 131
Battleship Potemkin, 112
Bay, Michael, 35
Beatty, Warren, 105
Beautiful Mind, A, 64
Before Sunrise, 83
Beineix, Jean-Jacques, 98
Benegal, Shyam, 101
Bessie, Alvah, 48
Besson, Luc, 98
Best boy, 147
Better Tomorrow, A, 99
In a Better World, 102
Bhuvan Shome, 101
Biberman, Herbert, 48
Bickle, Travis, 108
Bier, Susanne, 102
Big, 9
Big Heat, The, 123
Big Sleep, The, 123
Bigelow, Katherine, 72, 124
Birdman, 70
Birds, The, 72, 87
Birth of a Nation, 59
Black God, White Devil, 99
Black Hawk Down, 63, 126–127
Black Maria, 33
Black Narcissus, 58
Black Panther, 23, 63, 125
Black Rain, 127
Black Swan, 17, 114–115
Blacklist, 46
Blade Runner 2049, 116
Blade Runner, 5, 34, 44, 63, 83, 125–127
In the Blink of an Eye: Perspectives on Film Editing, 136
Blockbuster, 77–78
Blow Out, 136
400 Blows, The, 95
Blow-Up, 123
Blue, 61
Blue, 63
Blue is the Warmest Color, 20
Blue Velvet, 80, 116, 143
Body Double, 142
Body of Lies, 127
Bogart, Humphry, 47
Bonnie and Clyde, 20, 70, 96
Boogie Nights, 69, 136
Boom operator, 147
Bowfinger, Bobby, 134
Bowfinger, 134
Bowling for Columbine, 105
Boyhood, 106
Boy Meets Girl, 98
Brakhage, Stan, 114
Brando, Marlon, 62, 139
Brazilian *Cinema Novo*, 99
Breakfast Club, The, 24
Breathless, 95
Bringing Up Baby, 50, 121

British New Wave, 97
Broadway Melody, The, 125
Broken Blossoms, 120
Brooks, Louise, 19
Brush, 57–58
Bullock, Sandra, 108
Buñuel, Louis, 78, 96, 113
Burnett, Charles, 100
Bush Mama, 100
Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, 24, 122, 132

C

Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, The, 43, 124
Cagney, James, 47
Caligari to Nightcrawler, 43–44
Call of the Wild, The, 17
Camelot, 62
Camera, 37–38, 138–139
Camera obscura, 29–39
Camera operator, 147
Cameron, James, 106
Campbell, Joseph, 5, 21
Candyman, The, 19
Capitalism: A Love Story, 105
Capturing reality, 104
Carax, Leos, 98
Carrey, Jim, 140
Casablanca, 27, 35, 87
Casino, 63, 122
Celebration, The, 98
Chandler, Lee, 110
Chandler, Raymond, 67, 123
Change of Life, 99
Chaplin, Charlie, 119, 121
Chazelle, Damien, 68, 109, 114, 138
Chiaroscuro, 35–39, 43
Children of Men, 108
Chinatown, 123
Chinese Fifth and Sixth Generation, 101
Chromatic language, 57–64. *See also* Color
Chronotope, 76
Chungking Express, 38, 99, 121
Cinema City, 95
Cinéma du Look, 97–98
Cinema Novo, 99
Cinéma Vérite, 97
Cinematic trinity, 136
Cinématographe, 31–35
Cinematographer, 141
Cinematography, 29–39
Citizen Kane, 35, 38, 70, 81, 87
City Lights, 121
City of God, 105
City of Lost Children, The, 63
City of Sadness, A, 100
Cliff, Montgomery, 52
Clockwork Orange, A, 91, 114
Clooney, George, 108
Close Encounters of the Third Kind, 55
Closed framing, 91
Closely Watched Trains, 99
Close-Up, 98
Close-up (CU), 88, 89
10 Cloverfield Lane, 67
Club, Fight, 25
Cocteau, Jean, 113
CODA, 69
Cole, Lester, 48
Color, 57–64, 87–88
  blue, 63
  brush and oils, 57–58
  color wheel, 64
  emotion and, 61
  green, 63
  language of color, 59
  orange, 62
  red, 61–62
  and theme, 60–61
  three-strip Technicolor, 58–59
  violet, 63–64
  yellow, 62–63

Colorist, 147
Comedy, 121
Conflict, 13–20
  Greece, Rome, and Egypt, 14–15
  obstacles, 18
  self versus other, 15–16
  self versus self, 16–17
  self versus world, 17–18
  sex, 19–20
  theme, 14
  types of, 15
  violence, 19
1492: Conquest of Paradise, 127
Consequences of Love, The, 73
Conversation, The, 136
Cooper, Gary, 122
Coppola, Francis Ford, 43, 60, 62, 122, 136, 154
Corleone, Michael, 62, 70
Costume supervisor, 148
Costumer, 148
Counselor, The, 126, 127
Cowboys and Aliens, 120
Craft services, 148
Cranston, Bryan, 48
Crash, 81
Crew, sound, 52–53
Crime genre, 122
Cronenberg, David, 79, 81
Crouching Tiger, 59
Cuarón, Alfonso, 99, 106, 108
Czechoslovak New Wave, 99

D

Daguerre, Louis, 30, 37
Dalí, Salvador, 96, 113
Damsel, 24
Dark Knight, The, 23, 44, 140
Darkness, 41–48
  Blacklist, 46
  Caligari to Nightcrawler, 43–44
  forbidden pleasures, 45
  Hays Code, 46
  Hollywood Ten, 47–48
  importance, 42–48
  moral outrage, 45
  Red Scare, 47
  shadow psychology, 43
Dash, Julie, 100
Daughters of the Dust, 100
Day for Night, 135
Day the Earth Stood Still, The, 125
De Niro, Robert, 139–140
De Sica, Vittorio, 105
Death of Mr. Lazarescu, The, 100
Del Toro, Guillermo, 99
Delicatessen, 63
Demy, Jacques, 59
Departed, The, 122
Departure, 22
Depp, Johnny, 52
Deren, Maya, 113
Dern, Laura, 143
Desmond, Norma, 132
Detective genre, 123
Deus ex machina, 6–11, 15
  disaster, 7
  ellipsis, 7–9
  hollywood, 9–10
  pursuit, 7
  revolt, 7
  temptation, 10–11
Dialogue, 51–52
DiCaprio, Leonardo, 109
Dickson, W.K.L., 31
Director of photography (DP), 153
Director, 140–141
Dirty Dozen, The, 124
Disaster Artist, The, 51
Discontinuity, 78–79
Disney, Walt, 47
District 9, 125

Diva, 98
Dmytryk, Edward, 48
Documentary, 104–105
Dogme 95, 98
Dog Star Man, 114
Dominant and subsidiary contrasts, 85
Donnie Darko, 26
Double Indemnity, 123
Dracula, 124
Dramatic storytelling, 14
Dream, 111–118
Drive, 34
Dr. Strangelove, 52
Duchamp, Marcel, 96
Duck Soup, 121
Duellists, The, 127
Dumb and Dumber, 35, 121
Dune, 5, 116
Dunkirk, 7
Durden, Tyler, 25
Duvall, Shelley, 134

E

Early Works, 101
Eastman, George, 31
12:08 East of Bucharest, 100
Eastwoods, Clint, 122, 134
Easy Ride, 96
Ecstasy, 19
Edison, Thomas, 31, 50, 58, 76–77, 104, 112
Editor, 141–142
Editorial, 148
Edward Scissorhands, 24
Egri, Lajos, 4
Egypt, 14–15
8 ½, 135
Eisenstein, Sergei, 112–113
Ellipsis, 7–9
Elvis, 114–115
Emotion and color, 61
English Patient, The, 72
Enter the Void, 67, 69, 81
Entwistle, Peg, 142
Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, 26
Euripides, 14
Everdeen, Katniss, 23–24
Existenz, 79, 81
Exodus: Gods and Kings, 127
Exorcist, The, 35
Experimentation, 113–114
Extreme close-up (ECU), 88, 89
Extreme long shot (ELS), 88
Eyes Wide Shut, 134

F

Fairbanks, Douglas, 59
Farewell My Concubine, 101
Fassbinder, Rainer Werner, 121
Fast and Furious, 35
Field, Syd, 4
Film speed, 37–38
Fincher, David, 44
Firemen's Ball, The, 99
Fistful of Dollars, A, 122
Fitzcarraldo, 97
Fitzgerald, F. Scott, 8
Florida Project, The, 69, 110
Flying horse, 31
Foley art, 54
Forbidden pleasures, 45
Ford, John, 36, 90, 120, 122
Forman, Milos, 99
Forster, E.M., 7
Frame, 84–85
Frankenstein, 19, 124
Franklin, Aretha, 54
Freaky Friday, 9
Free Ride, A, 19
French *Nouvelle Vague*, 95
Friday the 13th, 20, 125

Front, The, 48

G

Gabbeh, 98
Gable, Clark, 121
Gaffer, 148
Gance, Abel, 113
Gauge, 37
Gekko, Gordon, 71
General, The, 121
Genre, 119–127
Gerima, Haile, 100
German Expressionism, 94
Get Out, 26
Get Shorty, 134
G.I. Jane, 127
Gillis, Joe, 132
Gilroy, Dan, 44
Gladiator, 63, 126–127
Godard, Jean-Luc, 6, 19, 105
Godfather, The, 27, 43, 60, 62, 70, 136
Going Forth By Day, 114
Goldman, William, 132
Gone Girl, 123
Gone with the Wind, 58
González, Alejandro, 109
Good Night, and Good Luck, 48
Good Year, A, 127
Good, the Bad, and the Ugly, The, 24
Goodfellas, 52, 69, 87, 122
Graduate, The, 70, 72, 96
Grand Budapest Hotel, The, 68, 116
Grant, Cary, 121
Grapes of Wrath, The, 35
Gravity, 108
Great Escape, The, 124
Great Expectations, 71
Great Gatsby, The, 87, 115
Great Train Robbery, The, 33, 58, 119
Greatest Showman, The, 126
Greece, 14–15
Green, 63
Greeting, The, 114
Grey Gardens, 97
Griffith, D. W., 59, 77, 81, 120
Grimm's Fairy Tales, 19
Grip, 149
Guilty by Suspicion, 48

H

Hair and makeup, 149
Hall, Edward T, 91
Halloween lighting, 36
Halloween, 35, 125
Hamlet, 17
Hammett, Dashiell, 123
Hannibal, 127
It Happened One Night, 50, 121
Hardcore Henry, 67
Hard Rock story, 79–80
Hark, Tsui, 99
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, 22
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, 25
Hawks, Howard, 120, 122
Hays Code, 46
Hays, Will H., 46
Heart strings, 55–56
Heat, 16, 86, 122
Heise, William, 19
Hepburn, Katharine, 47, 50, 121
Hero, 59
Hero, 21–27
Hero with a Thousand Faces, The, 5, 21
Herrmann, Bernard, 55
Herzog, Werner, 97
Hidden Dimension, The, 91
Hidden Dragon, 59
High and Low, 123
Himalayan thriller, 2–3
Hitchcock, Alfred, 20, 52, 55, 72, 81, 87, 90–92, 95, 118, 120, 125

Hoffman, Dustin, 52
Hollywood Reporter, The, 47
Hong Kong New Wave, 99
Hoop Dreams, 97
Horror genre, 124–125
Hostel, 35
Hotel, Overlook, 90
Hour of the Furnaces, The, 97
House of Gucci, 127
Hsiao-Hsien, Hou, 100
Hunger Games, The, 22, 24
Hurt Locker, The, 72, 124
Huston, John, 59

I

I Confess, 52
Idiots, The, 98
Iñárritu, Alejandro González, 99
Inception, 25, 68, 80, 87, 90, 116
Inglorious Bastards, 20
Initiation, 22
Interstellar, 80
Intolerance, 59, 77
Invasion of the Body Snatchers, 125
Iranian New Wave, 98
Irréversible, 66, 67, 79, 81
Italian neorealism, 95

J

Jackson, Michael, 2
Japanese New Wave, 98
Jarmusch, Jim, 100
Jaws, 27, 55
Jazz Singer, The, 50, 125
Jenkins, Barry, 110
Jeunet, Jean-Pierre, 63
Jones, Tommy Lee, 41
Journey, 21–27
  archetypes, 21–27
  damsel, 24
  departure, 22
  hero, 23
  initiation, 22
  metaphors, 26–27
  motifs, 27
  outcast, 24
  return, 22–23
  shapeshifter, 24–25
  symbols, 25–26
  trickster, 25
  villain, 23
Jurassic Park, 53, 68

K

Kaige, Chen, 101
Kar-wai, Wong, 90, 99, 121
Kaufman, Charlie, 132
Kaufmann, Andy, 140
Keaton, Buster, 119, 121
Kern, Richard, 101
Kid, The, 121
Kieslowski, Krzysztof, 61
Killer of Sheep, 100
Killer, The, 99
Killing, The, 117
King Lear, 72
Kingdom of Heaven, 126–127
Kingdom, Moonrise, 116
Kiss, The, 19
Kitano, Takeshi, 122
Kodachrome, 57–64
Kubrick, Stanley, 52, 70, 76, 87, 90–91, 114, 117, 134
Kuleshov, Lev, 112–113
Kurosawa, Akira, 72

L

Lady in the Lake, 67
La Femme Nikita, 98
La Grande Illusion, 97
LaLa Land, 68, 114, 126
Lamarr, Hedy, 19

LaMotta, Jake, 44, 140
Lang, Fritz, 19, 125
Language of color, 59
Lardner, Ring, Jr., 48
L. A. Rebellion, 100
LaRoy, Nellie, 138
Last Duel, The, 127
Last Emperor, The, 63–64
Last looks, 145–154
Last Tycoon, The, 8
Lawrence of Arabia, 72, 90
Lawson, John Howard, 48
Le Cercle Rouge, 122
Le Prince, Louis, 31
Le Samouraï, 123
Lean, David, 90
Ledger, Heath, 140
Legend, 127
Lenin, Vladimir, 94
Lenses, 39
Léon: The Professional, 98
Leone, Sergio, 120, 122
Les Bas-fonds, 97
Let the Right One In, 102
Licorice Pizza, 5
Life is Beautiful, 27
Life of an American Fireman, 33
Light, 29–39, 87–88
  aperture, 38
  backlighting, 36
  camera, 37–38
  camera obscura, 29–39
  Chiaroscuro, 35–39
  film gauge or sensor size, 37
  film speed, 37–38
  flags, snoots, and gobos, 36
  flying horse, 31
  Halloween lighting, 36
  high key versus low key, 34–35
  lenses, 39
  movies are light, 33–34
  shutter speed, 38
  silver images, 30
  "three-point" lighting, 36
  unsolved mystery, 31
  vampires, fairies, and demons, 32–33
  zoopraxiscope to *cinématographe*, 31–35
Lighting, 138–139
Line producer, 149
Linklater, Richard, 106, 114
Little Clay Cart, The, 15
Living in Oblivion, 133
Lloyd, Harold, 121
Location manager, 149
Lockwood, Don, 50
London, Jack, 17
Long Kiss, The, 131
Long shot (LS), 88–89
Look Back in Anger, 97
Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, The, 22
Lost Highway, 81
Love Bug, The, 4
Love, 20, 81
Lucas, George, 56
Luhrmann, Baz, 98, 114–115
Lumet, Sidney, 133
Lumière, Auguste, 32
Lumière, Louis, 32, 104
Lupin, 25
Lynch, David, 79–81, 116, 142–143

M

Machinist, The, 140
Mad Max, 98
Magnificent Seven, The, 23
Makavejev, Dušan, 101
Making Movies, 133
Mallick, Terrence, 36, 90
Maltese Falcon, 123
Maltz, Albert, 48
Mamet, David, 133–134

Manchester by the Sea, 110
Mann, Michael, 86
Man on the Moon, 140
Man with a Movie Camera, 113
Martian, The, 127
Master, The 116
Matchstick Men, 127
Matrix, The, 3, 5, 22, 24, 60, 87
McKee, Robert, 4
Medicine Man, 131
Medium shot (MS), 88, 89
Meirelles, Fernando, 105
Méliès, George, 32, 77–78, 81, 120, 124–125
Melodrama, 120–121
Melville, Jean-Pierre, 122
Memento, 7, 80, 116
Mentor, 24
Menzel, Jirí, 99
Meshes in the Afternoon, 113
Metaphors, 26–27
Method acting, 139–140
Metropolis, 19, 94, 125
Midnight Cowboy, 52
Milk Money, 131
Miller, George, 98
Ming-liang, Tsai, 100
Mise-en-scène, 87
Mission: Impossible, 53
Miyazaki, Hayao, 3
Monroe, Marilyn, 140
In the Mood for Love, 90, 121
Moonlight, 26, 110
Moonlight, 69
Moore, Michael, 105
Moral outrage, 45
Mothlight, 114
Motifs, 27
Motion, 65–73
  approaches to, 72–73
  arcs, rolls, and aerials, 71–72
  naturalistic, 68–69
  pan, 68
  power of movement, 66–67
  static, 67–68
  tilt, 68
  tracking, 69–70
  zoom, 70–71
Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), 45
Moulin Rouge, 115
Moviemaker's Master Class, 133
Mulholland Drive, 26, 79–80, 116, 142
Mummy, The, 124
Murch, Walter, 136
Murnau, F. W., 120
Murrow, Edward R., 48
Music, 49–56
Musicals, 125–126
Mussolini, Benito, 95
Muybridge, Eadweard, 30
My Man Godfrey, 50

N

Naked Lunch, 81
Napoleon, 113, 127
Narrative realism, 105–106
Naturalistic, 68–69
Naturalistic performance, 107
Network, 133
New German Cinema, 97
Newman, Paul, 52
Nichols, Mike, 70
Niépce, Nicéphore, 30
Night of the Living Dead, 3
Nightcrawler, 44
Niro, Robert De, 48, 67
No Country for Old Men, 41, 109, 122
Noé, Gaspar, 20, 66, 67, 79, 81
Nolan, Christopher, 80, 87, 90
Nomadland, 109
Nordic Noir, 101
Nosferatu, 94, 124

Notorious, 70, 89
Novo Cinema, 99
Now, Voyager, 120
No Wave Cinema, 100–101
Nuevo Cine Mexicano, 99–100
Nymphomaniac, 20

O
Obstacles, 18
October, 112
Oedipus Rex, 19
Oils, 57–58
In Old California, 45
On Directing Film, 133
Open framing, 90
Orange, 62
Ornitz, Samuel, 48
Oshima, Nagisa, 98
Out of Sight, 83
Outcast, 24
Owen, Clive, 108
Ozu, Yasujirō, 98, 121

P
Painting, 57–64
Palmer, Chili, 134
Pan, 68
Pandora's Box, 19
Pan's Labyrinth, 44, 99
Parallel Cinema, 101
Parasite, 3, 5, 26
Paris Is Burning, 97
Passions, The, 114
Paths of Glory, 117
Paul, Robert W., 32
Penn, Arthur, 70
Peony Pavilion, The, 15
Performance, 138–139
Pesci, Joe, 52, 67
Petrovic, Aleksandar, 101
Photography, 29–39
Pi, 115
Picnic at Hanging Rock, 98
Pirates of the Caribbean, 25
Pirates of the Caribbean, 52
Plato's cave, 3
Player, 137–143
Player, The, 69, 132
Pleasantville, 136
Poetic realism, 96–97
Poetics, 3, 21
Point Break, 72
Polti, Georges, 7
Pornographers, The, 98
Porter, Edwin S., 33, 58, 77, 81, 121
Portuguese *Novo Cinema*, 99
Porumboiu, Corneliu, 100
Postproduction, 135–136
Postproduction sound, 150
Potter, Harry, 23
Preproduction, 132–134
Princess Bride, The, 132
Production, 134–135
Production assistants (PAs), 149
Production coordinator, 150
Production designer, 85
Prometheus, 127
Prop master, 150
Proxemics, 83
Psycho, 8, 20, 55, 87, 91, 125
Puiu, Cristi, 100
Pull-back-to-reveal, 70
Pulp Fiction, 7, 25, 62, 81, 87

R
Radio Flyer, 131
Raging Bull, 44, 52, 67, 91, 140
Raiders of the Lost Ark, 70
It Rains in My Village, 101
Raise the Red Lantern, 101
Ran, 72
Raw, 5

Ray, Satyajit, 97, 101
Reagan, Ronald, 47
Realistic camera, 106–107
In the Realm of the Senses, 98
Rear Window, 83
Reasons for realism, 107–108
Red, 61
Red, 61–62
Red Dust, 46
Red Scare, 47
Red Shoes, The, 58
Reds, 105
Reed, Carol, 43
Renoir, Jean, 97
Requiem for a Dream, 115
Reservoir Dogs, 49
Return, 22–23
Reve, Nick, 134
Revenant, The, 18, 88, 109
Riefenstahl, Leni, 105
Right Side of My Brain, The, 101
Robin Hood, 127
Rohmer, Éric, 83
Rolls, 71–72
Roma, 106
Romanian New Wave, 100
Rome, 14–15
Romeo and Juliet, 4, 16
Romero, George A., 120
Room, The, 52
Rope, 7, 81
Rossellini, Roberto, 105
Roundhay Garden Scene, 31
Royal Tenenbaums, The, 68
Rule of thirds, 86–87
Run Lola Run, 62
Russian Ark, 70

S

Saving Private Ryan, 38, 66, 117
Scale, 87–88
Scandinavian Revival, 101–102
Scarface, 46, 122
Schindler's List, 27, 117
Science fiction, 125
Score, 54–55
Scorsese, Martin, 44, 63, 67, 72, 87, 91, 108, 122
Scott, Adrian, 48
Scott, Ridley, 44, 63, 126
Scream, 20, 35
Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting, 5
Screenwriting, 130–132
Script supervisor, 150
Se7en, 44, 123
Searchers, The, 90
Secret formula, 4–5
Secret Life of Walter Mitty, The, 35
Seidelman, Susan, 100
Sélavy, Rrose, 96
Self versus other conflict, 15–16
Self versus self conflict, 16–17
Self versus world conflict, 17–18
Sen, Mrinal, 101
Sensor size, 37
Set decorator, 150
Set designer, 151
Sex, 19–20
Shadow psychology, 43
Shakespeare, William, 16–17, 72
Shapeshifter, 24–25
Shawshank Redemption, The, 27, 87
Shining, The, 69–70, 87, 90, 134
Shot types, 88
Shrek, 4
Shutter speed, 38
Shyamalan, M. Night, 60, 134
Signs, 60
Silence to sound, 50–51
Singin' in the Rain, 50, 125, 142
Sixth Sense, 60

Skywalker, Luke, 5, 22–23
Smithereens, 100
Snake Eyes, 7, 69, 81
Social Network, The, 88
Solo Face, 104
Someone to Watch Over Me, 127
Sonatine, 122
Sophocles, 14
Sorrentino, Paolo, 73
Sound, 49–56
  crew, 52–53
  dialogue and subtext, 51–52
  effects, 53
  foley art, 54
  heart strings, 55–56
  improvisation, 52
  score, 54–55
  silence to sound, 50–51
  soundscape, 56
Sound mixer, 151
Sound of Music, The, 126
Soviet Montage, 94
Soy Cuba, 70
Space, 83–92
  closed framing, 91
  color, light, and scale, 87–88
  design and composition, 84
  dominant and subsidiary contrasts, 85
  frame, 84–85
  look book, 85
  meaning and, 90
  mise-en-scène, 87
  open framing, 90
  production designer, 85
  proxemics, 91–92
  rule of thirds, 86–87
  shot types, 88
2001: A Space Odyssey, 25, 52, 76
Sparrow, Jack, 25
Special effects supervisor, 151
Spider-Man, 23
Spielberg, Steven, 55
Sporting Life, The, 97
Squaw Man, The, 45
Stahr, Monroe, 8
Star Wars, 5, 24, 54
Star Wars: A New Hope, 22
State and Main, 134
Static, 67–68
Steiner, Max, 27
Stewart, James, 122
Stewart, Potter, 9
Still Life, 101
Storaro, Vittorio, 64
Story, 1–11. *See also Deus ex machina*
  essential ingredients, 5–6
  Himalayan thriller, 2–3
  secret formula, 4–5
  structure, 4
Strange Days, 69, 72
Stranger Than Paradise, 100
Stray Dog, 123
Streep, Meryl, 139
Strictly Ballroom, 98
Stunt coordinator, 151
Stunt performer, 151
Subtext, 51–52
Sunrise, 120
Sunset Boulevard, 132, 142
Super Sounds of the Seventies, 49–50
Surrealism, 96
Suspiria, 59
Swan Lake, 17
Sylvia North Story, The, 142
Symbols, 21–27

T

Taiwanese New Wave, 100
Talbot, Henry Fox, 30
Tarantino, Quentin, 20, 87
Taste of Honey, A, 97
Taxi Driver, 44, 52, 63, 72, 87, 108

Tenet, 80, 116
Terminator, The, 25
Texas Chainsaw Massacre, The, 3
Thelma & Louise, 127
Theme, color, 60–61
There Will Be Blood, 116
There's Something About Mary, 35, 121
Third Cinema, 97
Third Man, The, 43
Thor: Ragnarok, 25
Three Colours Trilogy: Blue, 61
"Three-point" lighting, 36
Three-strip Technicolor, 58–59
Thriller, 2
Tilt, 68
Time, 75–81
  actualities, 76
  alternative approaches, 80–81
  blockbuster, 77–78
  chronotope, 76
  discontinuity, 78–79
  Hard Rock story, 79–80
  screen, plot, and story, 79
  time machine, 81
  Trip to the Moon, A, 77–78
Timecode, 7
Time Machine, The, 75
Tin Drum, The, 97
Tirard, Laurent, 133
Tokyo Twilight, 98
Torn Curtain, 52
Toro, Guillermo del, 3, 44
Touch of Evil, 69
Tracking, 69–70
Transformers, 35
Transportation coordinator, 152
Tree of Life, The, 90
Trickster, 25
Trip to the Moon, A, 77, 125
Triumph of the Will, 105
Troopers, Storm, 5
Truffaut, François, 8, 105, 135
Truman Show, The, 3
Trumbo, 48
Trumbo, Dalton, 48

U

Umbrellas of Cherbourg, The, 59, 125
Unbreakable, 60
Un Chien Andalou, 83, 96, 113
Unforgiven, 122
Unit production manager, 152

V

Varda, Agnès, 3
Verdict, The, 133
Verisimilitude, 106
Vertigo, 65, 90, 92
Vertov, Dziga, 112–113
Very Long Engagement, A, 63
Villain, 23
Villeneuve, Denis, 116
Vinterberg, Thomas, 98
Viola, Bill, 114
violence, 19
Violet, 63–64
Visconti, Luchino, 105
Visual effects artist, 152
Vive L'Amour, 100
Vogler, Christopher, 5
von Trier, Lars, 20, 98

W

Waking Life, 114
Wall Street, 71
WALL-E, 4
Walter, Richard, 4
War, 123–124
War and Peace, 5
Waves, 93–102
  Australian New Wave, 98
  British New Wave, 97

Waves (*continued*)
Celebration, The, 98
Chinese Fifth and Sixth Generation, 101
Cinéma du Look, 97–98
Cinema Novo, 99
Cinéma Vérite, 97
Czechoslovak New Wave, 99
Dogme 95, 98
French *Nouvelle Vague*, 95
German expressionism, 94
Hong Kong New Wave, 99
Idiots, The, 98
Japanese New Wave, 98
L. A. Rebellion, 100
New German Cinema, 97
New Hollywood, 96
No Wave Cinema, 100–101
Nuevo Cine Mexicano, 99–100
Parallel Cinema, 101
poetic realism, 96–97
Portuguese *Novo Cinema*, 99
Romanian New Wave, 100
Scandinavian Revival, 101–102
Surrealism, 96
Taiwanese New Wave, 100
Third Cinema, 97
Yugoslav Black Wave, 101
Wayne, John, 122
Weir, Peter, 98
Welles, Orson, 38, 87, 95
Wells, H. G., 75
Wenders, Wim, 97
Western genre, 121–122
What's Up Tiger Lily?, 53
Where Eagles Dare, 124
Whiplash, 68, 109, 114–115
White, 61
White Balloon, The, 98
White Heat, 122
White Squall, 127
Wild at Heart, 80
Wild Bunch, The, 20, 24, 96
Williams, John, 55
Wings of Desire, 97
Witch Hunt, 47
Wizard of Oz, The, 22, 58
Wolf of Wall Street, The, 63
It's a Wonderful Life, 120
Wonder Woman, 24
Woo, John, 99
Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory, 104
World of Apu, The, 97
WR: Mysteries of the Organism, 101

X

X-Men, 25

Y

Y Tu Mamá También, 99
Yang, Edward, 100
Yellow, 62–63
Yimou, Zhang, 101
Yi Yi, 100
Yugoslav Black Wave, 101

Z

Zero Dark Thirty, 72
Zhangke, Jia, 101
Zhao, Chlóe, 109
Žilnik, Želimir, 101
Zodiac, 123
Zoom, 70–71
Zoopraxiscope to *cinématographe*, 31–35

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MICHAEL STINSON

LABYRINTH OF LIGHT

A JOURNEY INTO CINEMA

Labyrinth of Light: A Journey into Cinema offers a unique approach to the dominant art form of our time. Inspired by the meditations of a master storyteller, it approaches cinematic art as a labyrinth to be navigated by the viewer.

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